

TODAY

CHELSEA BLOOMS

Exotic and oriental—the trend for 1997 WEEKEND

SOME LIKE IT COLD

The women who want to conquer the North Pole WEEKEND

FA CUP GLORY

The Wembley Final countdown begins SPORT PAGES 50, 52

WHAT'S HOT THIS SUMMER

32-page supplement MAGAZINE

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1015 FOR YOUNG TIMES READERS AND DIRECTOR

Wet month forecast as heavens open to greet Labour's reign

By ALAN HAMILTON AND DAMIAN WHITWORTH

THE MET OFFICE yesterday predicted 30 days of rain after the driest two-year period on record, and only three days before Michael Meacher, the new Environment Secretary, meets water companies for a drought crisis summit.

Although not quite a deluge of Old Testament proportions, the forecast could be an indication that

Labour governments are the true masters of weather. In 1976, after an exceptionally dry summer, the heavens opened within hours of Harold Wilson appointing Denis Howell Minister for Drought.

Forecasters predict wet conditions through to the end of May and beginning of June, particularly in southeast England, which has suffered most from lack of rain. Thirty-day forecasts remain unreliable, but the weather chart for the

coming week looks very unsettled, with the potential for heavy rain across the whole country. Thunder showers could strike anywhere over the next two or three days; after that, further rain is likely to be concentrated in southern Britain. As a harbinger of the downpours to come, half an inch of rain fell in an hour in East Anglia yesterday morning.

Water companies yesterday welcomed the forecast, saying that it

would deter gardeners from using hoses and sprinklers and therefore help conserve the present low supplies.

However, they said that even 30 days' worth would do little to recharge underground aquifers and boreholes to the levels of two years ago, as so much summer rain merely evaporates or is taken up by plants.

The past 25 months have been the driest such period in Britain for

more than 200 years, and not since 1929 have the first four months of any year been as dry as 1997.

The year's first sprinkler bans have already been introduced in Guernsey and around Sutton in Surrey, in contrast to the north and west of England and Wales, where reservoir levels are much as they should be for the time of year.

The spectre of drought hangs over this year's Chelsea Flower Show, whose exhibitors were plan-

ning their displays long before the weathermen predicted an end to the prolonged dry spell. More than 20 exhibitors at the show, which opens next week, have adopted the theme of water conservation. Some will show how British gardens may have to be transformed to meet possible long-term climatic changes.

Among the teams of experts advising visitors on how to save their gardens will be a South

African Zulu healer who is an expert on drought-tolerant plants. What the water companies need urgently, however, is a healer of leaks. When he meets them on Monday, Mr Meacher is expected to insist they do more to plug mains fractures, which lose an estimated billion gallons of water a day.

Drought gardens, page 3
Forecast, page 26
Gardening, Weekend

Sinn Fein offered exploratory talks

Blair takes gamble for Ulster peace

By NICHOLAS WAIT, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR took a gamble for peace in Northern Ireland yesterday when he offered Sinn Fein the chance of meeting government officials before an IRA ceasefire.

In a speech which he had been preparing since well before the election, the Prime Minister told an audience in Belfast that his radical plan was "one further effort" to bring Sinn Fein into the full political process.

Hopes rose last night that Mr Blair may have kick-started the faltering peace talks when Sinn Fein announced that it would contact the Northern Ireland Office to make arrangements for the meeting.

Unionists also responded positively after Mr Blair offered this offer to Sinn Fein by saying that he thought it unlikely that there would be a united Ireland in his lifetime. In a carefully balanced speech Mr Blair said he wanted Sinn Fein to join the multi-party talks at Stormont, but he insisted that

they would be excluded until the IRA declared a ceasefire.

"My message to Sinn Fein is clear," he said. "The settlement train is leaving. I want you on that train. But it is leaving anyway, and I will not allow it to wait for you. You cannot hold the process to ransom any longer. So end the violence and end it now."

However, the Prime Minister said he would help the process by inviting Sinn Fein to their first talks with government officials in 15 months. The two sides, which are likely to be led by Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, and Quentin Thomas, a senior NIO official, last met on February 26 1996, 17 days after the IRA ceasefire ended.

Mr Mowlem, the Northern Ireland Secretary, wrote last night to Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein, setting out the Government's offer of talks. She said that the meetings would not give enough time to allow Sinn Fein to join

the separate multi-party talks when they resume at Stormont on June 3.

Mr Blair warned Sinn Fein that there would be no negotiations over the terms of an IRA ceasefire at the meeting and that Sinn Fein would be challenged to prove that republicans want peace.

"If they are, I will not be slow in my response," he said. "If they are not, they can expect no sympathy or understanding. I will be implacable in pursuit of terrorism."

The Prime Minister's remarks made clear that if the IRA declared a genuine ceasefire he was likely to waste little time in inviting Sinn Fein to the multi-party talks. His response would contrast with John Major, who faced a barrage of criticism from nationalists when he waited three months after the 1994 IRA ceasefire before allowing Sinn Fein to join "exploratory talks" with officials.

It also emerged last night that Mr Blair ensured that his speech received a favourable reception by giving a wide spectrum of political leaders advance notice of his plans. The Prime Minister telephoned John Major on Thursday night to go through his speech, while Dr Mowlem had a chat with Sir Patrick Mayhew, her predecessor.

She also spoke to David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, and to John Hume, the SDLP leader. However, she was unable to contact the Reverend Ian Paisley, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, who was the only senior political figure to react unfavourably to Mr Blair's speech.

Government sources said last night that Mr Blair was taking a bold approach to Northern Ireland because he believed that Labour's victory had created an opportunity to breathe fresh life into the peace process.

Flannan Fail, page 14
Leading article, page 23

Tory rivals unite over windfall tax

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

SIX contenders for the leadership of the Conservative Party today gave a warning that their windfall tax will hit miners' customers, shareholders and employees.

In a letter to *The Times*, they said that the Government's plan that the plan is legally unsound and looks more questionable by the day and that Labour's big idea "is coming back as we write".

The move by Kenneth Clarke, Stephen Dorrell, William Hague, Michael How-

ard, Peter Lilley and John Redwood to combine their forces in opposition to the tax, a centrepiece of the Labour election manifesto, is the Conservative leadership's most aggressive act since it lost power.

Senior strategists decided that with the press having a field day reporting the leadership election — particularly the dispute between Ann Widdecombe and Mr Howard — it was time to show that there were serious issues uniting the party. The letter is confirmation that once the leadership election is over, the Tories plan an outright assault on the tax.

Letters, page 23



Nova Hughes, who made an appeal because she believes her attacker will strike again

Kidnap victim recalls her 40 minutes of 'pure terror'

By RICHARD DUCE

A KIDNAP victim yesterday described 40 minutes of "pure terror" after she was held at knifepoint and bundled into the boot of her car.

Nova Hughes, 24, decided to make a public appeal for information about the abduction and robbery in the belief that her attacker still poses a serious threat to other women.

Miss Hughes, a trainee buyer with Marks & Spencer, said the man was so calm she believed he could strike again. She delivered a warning to other women: "I thought it would never happen to me and it has. Just be more careful when you are out."

She made her appeal on the

same day that police in London disclosed that there had been a similar attack on another lone woman on Thursday night. A man was arrested in connection with that attack and police cannot yet say whether the two incidents are linked.

Miss Hughes's ordeal began last Saturday during a shopping trip to west London. At about 1.30pm she returned to the Shepherd's Bush Green NCP car park where she was attacked from behind by a 6ft-tall black man she had noticed loitering. Miss Hughes, who is 5ft 2in, told a press conference at Hammersmith police station: "There was a hand on

my mouth and a knife by my throat. A guy said 'I have got a knife. I want the money'."

"I put my hands down. He got behind me and he told me to get into the boot. I told him I didn't want to, but he forced me in. My first thoughts were pure terror. I thought I was going to faint. I started to shout and scream but no-one heard me," she said.

Miss Hughes was forced to hand over her handbag and the security number for her bank card. "I gave him my handbag and said 'Take it'. He bundled me in the boot and locked it."

"I think he has done it. Continued on page 2, col 1

Mobutu forced out of power in Zaire

FROM DAVID ORR IN KINSHASA

PRESIDENT Mobutu of Zaire yesterday lost his grip on power after 32 years of autocratic rule. His corrupt regime was on the point of collapse last night after his hasty departure from the besieged capital of Kinshasa.

"The President resigns but he doesn't govern," Kin-Kley Mulumba, the Zairean Information Minister, told a press conference in the capital. "The President has ceased to play any role in state affairs. It is now up to the Government to conduct the nation's affairs."

President Mobutu, who has flown to his jungle retreat in northern Zaire, has been given until Monday to resign. The ultimatum was issued by Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader whose forces are poised to seize Kinshasa.

Speculation mounted in the capital that President Mobutu has gone for good. Sources indicated that from his ancestral village of Gbadolite he will fly to Morocco.

Lord of misrule, page 16

IN BRIEF

Alcopops face strict controls

Alcopop drinks, which are consumed by a growing number of teenagers, are to be investigated.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, warned the drinks industry that unless it acted quickly he would introduce measures to control the advertising, marketing and even the content of these alcoholic sweet drinks. Page 2

Post Office to halt closures

The Government looks set to give the Post Office new commercial freedoms in a reverse of Conservative plans to privatise the Royal Mail. It announced a review of the options and halted the PO's closure of Crown post offices in town centres. Page 27

German gold plan attacked

Theo Waigel, the German Finance Minister, faced an angry parliamentary debate criticising his plan to raise the value of Bundesbank gold to keep Germany on course for EMU. *Bild* newspaper described the proposal as witchcraft. Pages 19, 23



SCRAM DOWN



BOTTOMS UP

MIDDLESEX SYRUS RUGBY MATCH, TWICKENHAM	17 May
GLYNDOROUGH FESTIVAL OPERA	18 May - 24 August
CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW	30-31 May
ROYAL ACADEMY SUMMER EXHIBITION	1 June - 10 August
1ST CORNWALL TEST MATCH v AUSTRALIA, EDOURASTON	5-9 June
THE DEBUT, EPSON	7 June
ROYAL AGONY	17-20 June
WIMBLEDON TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP	25 June - 8 July
PRIMA VIVUE CLICQUOT GOLF CLUB, CONWAY PARK	29 June - 30 July
HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA	4-6 July

FA Cup final broadcast will reach a billion homes

By JOHN GOODBODY, SPORTS NEWS CORRESPONDENT

A RECORD 148 countries will be watching the FA Cup final live on television today in a match which is the biggest domestic money-spinning event in British sport.

The presence of many international stars, such as the Brazilian Juninho of Middlesbrough and the Italian Gianfranco Zola of Chelsea, has sent

black market prices for £35 seats soaring to more than £800.

Michael Bucks of CSI, which sells the international television rights, said yesterday: "We are expecting the match to be going to one billion homes around the world. This is partly because of the international stars playing but also because of the rising profile of English football."

Tony Blair will be at Wembley as will John Major and Tony Banks, the

Minister for Sport, who are both Chelsea supporters. Gate receipts from the 76,000 sell-out crowd, including 25,500 followers of each club, will total £2.5 million. Recent legislation prohibiting the resale of tickets above 10 per cent of their face value has increased the pressure on ticket touts.

The Football Association has once again mounted an undercover operation to frustrate people selling seats for profit. David Davies, the FA's director

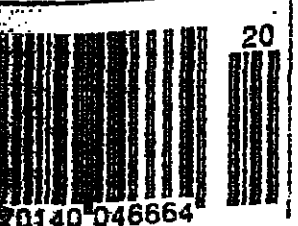
of External Affairs, said: "When these tickets come to light, we can trace them back. We are prepared to impose hefty fines and even bans on people getting tickets in future. We have done this in the past and will continue to do so."

The game will be the last televised by the BBC, which has covered the event every year since 1938. From next season, ITV will be screening it.

Cup coverage, pages 50, 52

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Veve Clicquot
CHAMPAGNE OF THE SEASON

THE TIMES ON MONDAY

10 P

ALL NEXT WEEK

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READING FOR ALL
SIXTH FORMERS

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FA CUP

Verdicts from Oliver Holt,
Rob Hughes, Steve
McManaman
and Lynne Truss

**14 PAGES OF
SPORT**

RUGBY

The Lions in Africa: A 16-page special

PLUS:

Why Marks and Sparks is out of fashion

Kidnapping terror

Continued from page 1

before. When I panicked he told me to calm down. I think he could do it again."

During the next 40 minutes the man drove around the car park several times before going to a shopping centre to withdraw £200 in cash.

"He started the car. I could see daylight through a crack in the boot. Then he stopped, opened the boot and told me to write down my cash card pin number. He disappeared. I waited about ten minutes. I panicked, I started banging on the boot and shouting and screaming. Then I heard footsteps and it was him coming back. I begged him to let me out."

She lied, telling her attacker she was claustrophobic, and persuaded him to leave the boot unlocked on condition that she did not try to raise the alarm until he had escaped. Miss Hughes said: "I left it two minutes then climbed out."

The car was still inside the NCP. I found an attendant who called the police. Then I burst into tears."

The NCP company has offered a £5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the woman's attacker and it has promised a review of the security at the car park.

The second incident, on Thursday, took place near Hampstead Underground station, in north London. A woman aged 54 was attacked by a man with a knife who forced her into the boot of her car, took her credit cards and made her reveal her cash card number. The man drove around in her car and finally let her go 80 minutes later at a car park in Camden.

At 12.30am yesterday the car was stopped in Muirgate and the driver was arrested by an armed response vehicle on patrol in the City. A man, aged 29, was being interviewed by the police last night.

Straw orders urgent inquiry into the alcopops industry

By JILL SHERMAN,
CHIEF POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

THE Home Secretary ordered an urgent investigation yesterday into the sale and marketing of alcopops.

Jack Straw also told the drinks industry that unless it acted quickly he would introduce measures to control the advertising, marketing and even the content of the drinks, which are popular with young people. He said the Government was deeply concerned about the issues surrounding the sale of the drinks.

The move comes a day after producers of alcopop were condemned as grossly irresponsible by a judge after he heard that a 14-year-old boy became drunk on alcoholic lemonade and cider, and then burnt down a school.

It also follows the publication of a survey yesterday claiming that more than half of teenagers consume alcopop drinks — which have an average alcohol content of 5 per cent. This is about the same alcoholic strength as most continental lagers but stronger than most English beers. The alcohol content in wine is about 11 to 12 per cent.

Mr Straw is particularly concerned that the drinks are often marketed to appeal to those under 18, sometimes with the use of cartoon characters and drug-related images. "Alcopops abuse is a real concern," he said. "We all know the links between alcohol abuse and crime. Everything must be done to stop young people falling into a downward spiral of offending."

The Portman Group, which is funded by the drinks industry, has drawn up a code of practice to stop abuses in advertising and marketing. Mr Straw said that if firms



Some of the alcopop range: it began with a farmer who decided to make a brew from his lemon crop

Brewers deny any guilt in £265m trade

By CHRIS AYRES

MOST major brewers now produce sweet alcoholic drinks for the alcopops market, estimated to be worth more than £265 million in sales each year.

Bass produces two-thirds of all alcopops, including brands such as Hooper's Hooch and Red, which earn the company about £180 million. Other popular brands include Shott's, produced by Whitbread, Two Dogs from Merrydown, and Woody's, manufac-

tured by Beverage Brands. The original alcopop brand was Two Dogs, which was invented by an Australian farmer who decided to turn the lemons in his orchard into a brew.

Last night, the row over alcopops appeared to have ended. Bass's share price, which closed 13p down at 816p. However, shares in Marston, which produces Mog and Rapido, remained unchanged, as did Merrydown, the maker of Two Dogs. Bass was the first company to respond to Mr Straw's

should not be shown on bottles and cans. Some of the proposals would need backing from the Office of Fair Trading.

Home office officials said that Mr Straw would back these moves but that further action might have to be taken if under-age abuse continued.

Mr Straw and George Howarth, the Licensing Minister, are having meetings with the drinks industry to make them act quickly. Responsibility for regulating alcoholic drinks falls between several government departments including the Home Office, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Portman Group said yesterday that it intended to

work closely with the Home Office to tackle underage alcohol misuse but said the proposed measures should be self-regulated by the industry. The organisation said: "We share the Government's concern over misuse of alcohol by young people and recognise public attention is being focussed on the role of alcopops."

Other brewers and drinks include: Carlsberg-Tetley — Lemonhead, Orangehead, Vauld Colt/Merrydown — Barker's Liquid Gold; Scottish Courage — Sub Zero; Halesowen International — Memphis Mist; Lanchester Group — Lemon Lips, Cola Lips.

quickly these have taken off in the last 18 months," he said. Alcopops were often much stronger than traditional drinks, children were able to drink them without realising they were having alcohol, and they were also easy on the palate, encouraging under-aged drinkers.

"You can see these drinks are targeted at kids," Mr Sutherland said. "The bottles are designed with weird and wacky colours which children favour. Even if they are not directly targeting children, it's the children who are picking up on it."

Report says drinks are enticing 11-year-olds

By DOMINIC KENNEDY

ALCOPOPS are enticing children as young as 11 to drink alcohol. An unpublished study by the Centre for Substance Abuse Research in Swansea of 1,235 children aged 11-16 discovered that 29 per cent of 11-year-olds had drunk alcohol at least once a week in the previous three months. Of those, 64 per cent said their favourite drink was an alcoholic lemonade or cola.

The figures are the provisional results of a survey of pupils from two schools in Plymouth and two in

London. An earlier study by the same team showed that 57 per cent of under-aged drinkers had switched from drinks such as beers, wines and spirits to alcopops in the 18 months since they became widely available.

The new data shows that 55 per cent of all children aged 11-16 are regular drinkers of alcohol, rising to 71 per cent of 16-year-olds. Alcopops decline in popularity as the children grow older. They are the favourite drink of at least half of children who are regular drinkers of alcohol up to the age of 15 but the first choice of only 40 per cent of

16-year-old drinkers. They are more popular with girls, 60 per cent of whom named them as their preferred drink against 42 per cent of boys.

Ian Sutherland, of the Centre of Substance Abuse Research, said police and probation officers were now identifying alcopops, which made profits of £280 million last year, as more of a problem than drugs among children. "The alcohol industry keeps saying they are targeting over-18s. It is common knowledge that it is mainly under-aged drinkers using these things. Our research has shown how

quickly these have taken off in the last 18 months," he said.

Alcopops were often much stronger than traditional drinks, children were able to drink them without realising they were having alcohol, and they were also easy on the palate, encouraging under-aged drinkers.

"You can see these drinks are targeted at kids," Mr Sutherland said. "The bottles are designed with weird and wacky colours which children favour. Even if they are not directly targeting children, it's the children who are picking up on it."

Government to review ban on gays in Armed Forces

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE Government is set to review the ban on homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces.

The Ministry of Defence has been told in a memorandum from the policy unit at Downing Street that the issue has to be addressed. Confirmation that the new Government might lift the ban followed a statement by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, during the election campaign, that people should not be discharged from the Services for homosexuality. He said: "We pledge a free vote and we will

consult with the military on how to implement change."

The memorandum from No 10, signed by Liz Lloyd, a member of the policy unit and dated May 6, says: "The Government will form a view on the weight of evidence, taking into account the UK's laws, the views of the European Court and the Armed Forces."

The memo also promises a study of the findings of an extensive report into the issue carried out last year by the MoD. The Ministry circulated a questionnaire to hundreds of servicemen and women; the majority rejected any change in policy.

Last night, a MoD spokesman confirmed that there was now a new attitude. After reviewing the whole question, the Government would seek to "establish a way forward", the MoD spokesman said.

Although the review was welcomed by Stonewall, the pressure group for gay and lesbian rights, a spokeswoman expressed concern that three of the new defence ministers had voted against lifting the ban on homosexuality in the Armed Forces following an amendment proposed last year to the Armed Forces Bill. "We're not sure about the views of George Robertson [the new Defence Secretary]," she added.

Tate's centenary celebrations start

By A STAFF REPORTER

THE Tate Gallery today begins a season of exhibitions, publications and events to celebrate its centenary and point the way towards its future.

As media sponsor, The Times will keep readers informed of the special events and highlights of Tate 100, which begins with the 1997 Centenary Displays. These feature a large number of masterpieces held at the Tate, from Stubbs and Gainsborough to Matisse and Pollock.

Henry Tate's Gift, which begins in July, is an exploration of the gallery's foundation and includes paintings which were part of his original gift to the nation.

Other events include The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts, which explores the connections between British and continental European painting and sculpture between 1860 and 1910.

A centenary gala will help to raise funds towards the creation of the Tate's new galleries in London, and Centenary Day, on July 21, will be a family day and public celebration of the opening in 1897.

Magazine, page 45

Young have no sympathy with suicides

Attempted suicides by young people have doubled over the last ten years but their peers are unsympathetic to those who suffer from depression, according to a report published yesterday.

A survey by the Samaritans reveals more than one in three young people remain either ignorant or insensitive to the dangers of depression. Although 29 per cent of the 500 under-25s surveyed knew of someone who had killed themselves, 36 per cent had lost someone close, such as a friend or family member — 37 per cent agreed that depressed people should "pull themselves together". Among adults that figure fell to 27 per cent.

PCs cleared

Paul Bignall and Victoria Parker, two police constables, were cleared of using police computers to check on the boyfriend of Mr Bignall's wife. The PCs, who had been having an affair, were fined £50 each under the 1990 Computer Misuse Act, but the High Court ruled they had been prosecuted under the wrong Act.

Raped in van

A young woman was raped by three men who dragged her into their van as she walked along a street in broad daylight. The 28-year-old victim was pulled into the white transit van as she waited to cross a road at a roundabout near her home in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, driven to a quiet country lane and raped.

Phone tragedy

A woman driving to her boyfriend in Peterborough called from her mobile phone to say she was five minutes away. When she failed to arrive he rang back, and was answered by a policeman who said that Tracy Hackman, 23, of Bristol had collapsed and crashed. She died from internal bleeding caused by chronic gastritis, an inquest heard.

School destroyed

A fire that destroyed a secondary school and damaged a further education centre today have been started deliberately, police believe. The blaze at the Abraham Mansfield Centre in Crumpsall, Manchester, started shortly after security staff were attacked by youths who threw slabs of concrete and other missiles at their caravan.

Suit suit lost

Lenny Lottery, the former lottery correspondent of The Sun who last week defected to the Mirror, lost the right to his trademark white suit with red lottery balls in the High Court. The dispute was resolved when Mr Justice Newberger awarded the suit to The Sun, which had said the suit was supplied for Lenny Lottery's work.

A story headline "Defeated Tories rent their bones to Labour MPs" (May 10) incorrectly stated that Mrs Teresa Gorman MP had left her house in Lord North Street. Mrs Gorman still lives there and has not rented it out since the election.

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THE TIMES SATURDAY MAY 17 1997

Chelsea show prepares to weather the drought, despite the rain

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

IN SPITE of the Met Office's long-range forecast of a summer monsoon, particularly in the South-East, the spectre of drought hangs over this year's Chelsea Flower Show. Exhibitors are competing to create gardens that can survive almost desert conditions.

A Zulu healer, who is an expert on drought-tolerant plants, will be among those advising visitors how

to save their own gardens. After the driest start to the year since 1929, more than 20 exhibitors at the Royal Horticultural Society's show, which opens next week, have adopted the theme of water conservation. Some will show how British gardens may have to be transformed to meet possible long-term climatic changes.

Pershore College of Horticulture in Hereford and Worcester is mounting an exhibition called

Plants for Arid Conditions. David Edmonds, a landscape lecturer at the college, said: "We will be telling visitors how to water their gardens carefully and which plants to choose that can survive drought. People are buying more and more plants that need less and less water. We are entering the great unknown where we don't know how much water we are going to get."

Simon Shire, who was putting the finishing touches to his Garden

for Dry Seasons in the showground yesterday, said: "It is now increasingly important to find plants that can survive both severe English winters and drought."

He has filled the garden with hardy Mediterranean herbs, shrubs and trees such as eucalyptus and olive. "To start with I decided to go without a lawn and put decking down for the main walking areas. People are very concerned about the long-term

future for their gardens." The organisation Wateraid, which tackles drought in Africa and Asia, is bringing to life an African kitchen garden that relies solely on a hand pump connected to deep tube wells.

Ingeniously, the Age Concern Garden of Life is meeting the gardener's twin nightmares of low rainfall and water-use bans with a configuration of moss and cobbles to create the illusion of a stream.

Elliot Ndlovu, who practises as a traditional doctor in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountains of KwaZulu-Natal, will be at the stand of the National Botanical Institute of South Africa to share his knowledge of his country's medical plants.

"Water is precious in Southern Africa, and little, if any is spent on watering herbs. Accordingly most plants in healers' gardens are drought-tolerant, and possess suc-

culent leaves and stems or underground storage organs which see them through the worst of the dry periods," a spokesman for the institute said.

The Chelsea Flower Show opens on Tuesday for RHS members. Public tickets for Thursday and Friday, must be booked in advance. Tel: 0171-344-4343

Gardening, Weekend section

People who live in glass houses see the supplier jailed

By PAUL WILKINSON

A MIDDLE-AGED couple simply wanted a conservatory on their semi-detached house, but their home improvement project finished yesterday with everyone living at new addresses. The couple fled their home in fear after receiving threats for challenging the bill, and last night their supplier was discovering life in a prison cell.

Stephen Thoms, 39, had three times raised the cost of installing the conservatory at Stanley, Co Durham. When his dissatisfied customers, Barry and Heather Rutherford, refused to pay the final instalment, he threatened to send in the "hard men" to deal with them. He boasted: "No police or court in the land will stop me. I am a law unto myself."

At Durham Crown Court, other dissatisfied customers watched as he was jailed for three months for demanding money with menaces. He also faces a contempt of court action for mouthing abuse at the customers in court.

It also emerged that Thoms had allegedly threatened lawyers handling a civil claim brought by the Rutherfords. In a letter to them, he suggested: "You are playing a very

dangerous game". The couple had agreed a £3,370 fee with Thoms's firm Oakwood Conservatories, based in a Newcastle upon Tyne garden centre. After signing the contract, Thoms claimed the cost of the job had risen and asked for more money.

The couple said they would not pay until the job was completed to their satisfaction. He wrote to them saying: "My advice is to pay for the extra and do not treat me as a soft touch. As others have found out to their cost, I'm not blowing off steam, I'm deadly serious."

Mrs Rutherford told the



Thoms threatened to send "hard men"

court: "Mr Thoms rang our house and spoke to my husband. He told him if he did not pay the extra money he had ways of dealing with him. He said he had his own private firm of bailiffs and had had men who he would send round to deal with a bastard like my husband."

"Thoms also threatened to break up the conservatory and told my husband he'd have to watch his back or he would be dealt with if he did not pay this extra money."

"In all we paid him £3,714. It was when he came back demanding more that we complained. He was so forceful we thought if we paid he would bump the price up again. The job was never properly finished."

Thoms tried to claim this was "over-vigilant debt collection" but Mr Recorder John Muir told him: "What happened here was quite deplorable. Such was the fear that you induced into Mrs Rutherford's mind, she had no alternative but to leave that house that had been purchased shortly before. She was frightened for herself and her children."

The couple have since sold the house.



Cub scouts framing a 170ft x 80ft map of Great Britain at Olympia, west London, yesterday. Ordnance Survey provided 1,200 regional maps which 500 cubs have been assembling since February

Forget the dresses - even the brochure will cost you £1,250

By EMMA WILKINS

A BROCHURE signed by Diana, Princess of Wales, for an auction of her dresses goes on sale today for £1,250.

The purple leather-bound volume, believed to be the most expensive catalogue ever produced by an auction house, contains colour pictures of the 80 outfits to be sold by Christie's in New York on June 25. The Princess has posed in six outfits for photographs by Lord Snowdon but most of the pictures were taken previously by press photographers.

A spokeswoman for Christie's said that there were 250 limited editions of the catalogue available, of which 91 have been reserved.

For those of more modest means, a canvas-bound catalogue is available at £160 and a paperback edition costs £35. Christie's has received almost £350,000 from pre-bookings for all three catalogues.

The auction, which is expected to raise £4 million, was the idea of Prince William, who suggested selling the dresses to make money for charity and create some space in his mother's overcrowded wardrobes.

The proceeds will go to two of the Princess's favourite charities: the Royal Marsden Hospital Cancer Fund and the Aids Crisis Trust.

Most of the dresses were created by British designers between 1981 and 1996. Among the designers are Victor Edelstein, Norman Hartnell, Zandra Rhodes, Bruce Oldfield, David and Elizabeth Emanuel.

The Princess's wedding dress - the Emmanuels' most famous commission - is not included in the



A Catherine Walker ball dress among the collection

sale. Many of the outfits are by Catherine Walker, who made a long dress of lilac silk with beaded bodice which the Princess first wore at a gala celebrating 40 years of the Queen's reign. The dress, which cost the Princess £2,200, is expected to fetch at least £150,000. Another Walker on sale is a white embroidered crepe evening dress with a high-collared bolero jacket which the Princess first wore to the British Fashion Awards in 1989. It cost £3,500 and is expected to fetch £250,000.

There is no formal reserve price on any of the dresses, which range from size 8 to 12.

Bus driver cleared of cyclist's death

By TIM JONES

THE widow of a cyclist ran sobbing from court yesterday after a judge ordered a jury to clear a bus driver who had crushed her husband beneath the wheels of his vehicle.

The jury was told that because of conflicting evidence it would not be safe to convict the driver of causing death by dangerous driving. Later Jane Waldron, a mother of two, was too distraught to speak.

Russell Waldron, 35, died after being involved in an alleged road rage incident with Walton Christie, the bus driver, during an evening rush hour last May.

Witnesses had told Knightsbridge Crown Court that Mr Christie, 54, from Enfield, north London, had sworn at Mr Waldron for overtaking him on the outside and that he had driven as close as he could to intimidate him before colliding with the rear wheel of the bicycle. Seconds later, the court was told, Mr Waldron, from Forest Hill, southeast London, had disappeared under the wheels of the bus. Mr Christie had called for an ambulance but Mr Waldron had died instantly.

Mr Christie, who denied causing death by dangerous driving, said he had braked as soon as Mr Waldron overtook him and insisted that the cyclist had been alongside his bus when he fell beneath it.

Judge Richard Walker said some witnesses had spoken of Mr Waldron moving into the path of the bus as it drove along Waterloo Bridge. Others, he said, had not.

Revenge arsonist who killed four children gets life

By A STAFF REPORTER

A BUSINESSMAN was sentenced to life imprisonment yesterday for murdering four of his nephews and nieces in an arson attack.

Fred Heyworth, 59, had wanted revenge on his estranged wife Janette and her sister, to whom she fled to escape his violent rages. Winchester Crown Court heard. He had never shown any remorse, and remained obsessed by Janette's desertion. Heyworth told his son, Rob Neil, during a prison visit that Janette, was his intended target. "She was lucky. I was going to kill her that night."

Instead after attending a social evening with fellow freemasons in Southampton he poured petrol through the letterbox of his sister-in-law's house where his wife had been staying. He knew that his young nephews and nieces were asleep upstairs.

Terry Good, 12, Alison, 10, Nicola, 8 and Patrick, 6, died in their beds. Mrs Justice Steel told Heyworth: "What evil brainstorm prompted you to act as you did we shall never know."

He was also found guilty of the attempted murders of the children's parents, Beverly and Melvyn Good and their eldest child Kelly, 14. He had denied all the charges.

Heyworth's son said that he deliberately picked his sister-in-law's house because she was the one woman in his life that he could not dominate. His first wife left him after years of violent abuse and Mr Neil, 33, described his father

as "an evil, domineering and uncaring person". "He would become physically very violent to keep his dominant role."

Heyworth, who had been adopted by a wealthy Manchester family and went on to found own successful printing business, enjoyed a string of affairs with young girls who were part of a marching band that he formed in Southampton.

In 1979 he married one of the girls, Janette, who was twenty years younger than him and although they had two children their marriage was punctuated by a series of violent assaults by Heyworth.

She left him on New Year's Day 1995 after Heyworth beat her during an argument and moved into her sister's home. Mr Neil said "Years of violent domination had almost broken Janette but Beverly gave her the strength to continue her life. He hated Beverly for this."



Heyworth: "an evil and domineering man"

£200 fine for beastly behaviour in beauty shop

By A STAFF REPORTER

AN ASSISTANT at an exclusive fashion store attacked a beauty therapist after complaining that her eyebrows and lashes had been dyed too light.

Lisa Branch, 26, pinned Louise-Marie Sullivan against a wall and punched her repeatedly. Yesterday she was fined £200 at Horseferry Road Magistrates' Court, London, after admitting common assault.

The attack took place at the Louise-Marie Clinic in Knightsbridge at lunchtime on December 19. Robin Nelson, for the prosecution, told the magistrates that Branch had had her eyebrows and lashes tinted at the salon the previous day. She returned on the 19th, complaining that the lashes were not dark enough, but seemed happy when Miss Sullivan told her she would redo them the following Monday at no cost. Later that day Branch returned demanding that the work be done then.

"She started pushing Miss Sullivan in the chest with her finger. The victim told her she would give her her money back."

Branch followed Miss Sullivan when she went to get money from her handbag. "Miss Sullivan was pinned to the wall and she saw the defendant's clenched right fist coming towards her face in a big swing movement."

Branch, who worked for Nicole Farhi in Sloane Street, told the court: "She slammed the door in my face and it hit me on the head."



If you'd like to know more about Mr. Jack Daniel and his unique whiskey, write to the Jack Daniel Distillery, Lynchburg, Tennessee USA.

WATCH OUT FOR THESE MEN. They've caught bigger fish. Faced meaner foes. Handled tougher situations than most.

They're Tennessee whiskeymen, trading stories in Jack Daniel's old office here at the distillery. That's Bull Waggoner on the right, going on about the trophy bass he caught last spring. (We're still trying to account for its existence.) Some tall tales will fill this room before everyone's through. But when these men talk of how faithful we are to Jack Daniel's whiskey-making ways, there's no exaggeration.



JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Speeding driver 'lassoed spy camera'

By A STAFF REPORTER

A SPEEDING motorist who realised that he had been caught on a police camera leapt from his car, lassoed the camera, tied the rope to his bumper and drove off, according to police.

They have charged a 19-year-old, whom they would not name, with causing £20,000 criminal damage. He will appear in court next month. Police allege that the youth had been speeding on a 30mph road in Weston-super-Mare, a North West Somerset, last week. A North West Somerset and Somerset police spokesman for Avon and Somerset said: "Drivers may not care for our cameras but we cannot tolerate them taking the law into their own hands."

Motoring organisations believe that road cameras are becoming a focus for road rage. Adrian Ruck, an AA

spokesman, said: "Frustrated drivers are increasingly venting their anger on speed cameras. But whatever they do has already been caught on film for prosecution and there is no point in causing needless and costly damage."

Drivers have sprayed lenses with paint, covered cameras with tarpaulin or dustbin liners and pointing them in the wrong direction. Some have tried to steal the film. The AA said the latest allegation was the first case it had heard of where the entire camera unit had been stolen.

Local authorities are concerned at the increased costs of repairing damaged equipment. Already this year in the West Country cameras have been damaged at Cleve, near Bristol, and Lyng, near Taunton. In March a motorist built a bonfire of car tyres and set alight a camera on the A37 at Gurney Slade near

Wells. Gloria Cawood, the leader of North Somerset District Council, said: "I'm horrified that anyone should want to damage these cameras, which are designed to save lives." Civic chiefs are offering a £250 reward for information leading to the conviction of camera wreckers.

The AA said: "Most culprits lash out at the end of a long journey or after being stuck in traffic jams. The last thing they want to see is a flash in their rearview mirror as they drive past. We have had motorists trying to prise the film out and others who have sprayed the lens with paint."

In general we support speed cameras as long as they are located at genuine blackspots. We don't want to see Britain's roadsides and hedgerows bristling with cameras just to boost government



Directions:

On any surface, apply accelerator smoothly and evenly. quattro 4 wheel drive adheres instantly.

Desert Classic founder arrested at height of breach of contract claim against PGA

Golf promoter held in Dubai without charge

BY FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

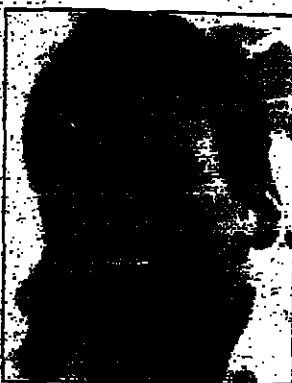
THE Foreign Office has been asked to intervene over a British businessman being held in prison in Dubai, with no reasons given nor charges laid. George Atkinson, 45, who organised and promoted the Professional Golfers' Association European Tour tournament, the Desert Classic, has been held for 11 weeks.

Mr Atkinson was arrested on March 1 while visiting the Desert Classic as a tourist and, despite pressure from the British Embassy in Dubai, has not been told how long he will be held, or on what charge. In Dubai it is legal to hold someone indefinitely. The authorities say they are continuing investigations.

His lawyers in London, Dawson & Co, believe the reason for his arrest is a dispute — now the centre of a £4 million breach-of-contract claim by Mr Atkinson at the High Court in London — over the promotion rights to the Desert Classic.

Mr Atkinson's wife Helene, 49, and her two teenage daughters are distraught. She said: "We are devastated. I find the whole thing absolutely amazing. George is a strong man, a fighter, a very respected man, but when I spoke to him the other day he did not sound too good."

She said that publicity for his case was their chief hope of some action, even though the Foreign Office has given warning that media coverage could be damaging for his case. "We lived for a long time in Dubai and it was a lovely place, especially to bring up small children. I never



Atkinson worked in Dubai for ten years

thought anything like this could happen," Mrs Atkinson said.

The dispute over the Desert Classic arose in 1992 when the Dubai Government sought to take over the promotion rights, then held by Mr Atkinson's company, Karl Litten (Overseas) Ltd, under a renewable contract with the PGA European Tour. The tournament was played on a multimillion-pound golf course which Mr Atkinson designed and built. In the mid-1980s, it was the only grass

golf course to be built in the desert.

The first tournament was in 1989 and it quickly became one of the big events in the professional golf world. In 1992 the Dubai Government approached Mr Atkinson with a view to taking over the tournament's organisation and promotion but he declined the terms of sale offered.

According to Matthew Rea, Mr Atkinson's solicitor, there was "a series of abrupt terminations of contracts", which in effect cut KLO out of the organisation of the tour. Within days, the PGA European Tour entered "a separate and identical agreement for the organisation and promotion" of the Desert Classic, with the Government-owned Dubai World Trade Centre.

Mr Atkinson left Dubai in December 1993, after ten years, and shortly afterwards his company launched proceedings against the PGA European Tour for loss of profits estimated at £4 million.

Documents disclosed in the run-up to the case reveal that the Tour was in discussion with the Dubai Government

without Mr Atkinson's knowledge, before the latter's contracts were terminated.

It was at a "particularly critical stage of the legal proceedings", with KLO seeking the disclosure of documents and the Tour seeking £400,000 be paid into court by Mr Atkinson as a security for costs, that Mr Atkinson decided to visit Dubai in February.

Just before he was due to return he was arrested, Mr Rea said: "Needless to say, it is extremely difficult for him to continue to pursue the High Court litigation from a Dubai prison and if he is still there by the trial date in December, he won't of course be able to give evidence."

Repeated bail applications have failed after meeting a series of obstacles put up by the Dubai authorities. Mr Rea maintains. He said that in his view, Mr Atkinson's detention was linked with his legal action and his claim that the PGA Tour "conspired with the Government of Dubai" which "could be embarrassing".

The PGA European Tour, which is strongly resisting Mr Atkinson's claim, argues that it was told by the Dubai Government that Mr Atkinson was unable to perform his contract with the Tour.

John Magnin, of Nicholson Graham & Jones, solicitor to the PGA, said: "Our position is that we are defending this case robustly and will continue to do so. So far as Mr Atkinson is concerned, we don't have a view as to his present predicament and have no special knowledge of the reasons for it."

The Dubai Embassy said it had no knowledge of Mr Atkinson's case.



The Dubai golf course that Mr Atkinson built



George Atkinson's wife Helene and their daughter Alice. They are "devastated"

Mr Racing reaches end of his course

BY RICHARD EVANS
RACING CORRESPONDENT

AFTER being accused of rudeness and arrogance, John Jenyns acted like a gentleman yesterday and resigned as a steward at York racecourse.

The swift decision came after his position as chairman of the panel of stewards was regarded as untenable because of the way he treated two television executives at the racecourse this week. Mr Jenyns ordered John Fairley, a former managing director of Yorkshire Television, and Andrew Franklin, producer of Channel 4 racing, to stand throughout a half-hour meeting and Mr Fairley was told to take his hand out of his pocket.

A statement from the racecourse said: "Following the conclusion of the May race meeting, Mr John Jenyns offered his resignation as a member of the stewards panel at York and this has been accepted by the race committee. The committee wishes to thank Mr Jenyns for his valued services as a steward over the past 15 years."

Mr Jenyns, 52, known as York's Mr Racing, is also a steward at Pontefract and Redcar. Both racecourses were discussing his future last night. The Jockey Club, which is ultimately responsible for the integrity of the sport, will be hoping he stands down from both courses. "If he does not jump, he will be pushed," one insider said yesterday.

It is rare for racing's conservative establishment to disown one of its members with such alacrity, but the way he treated the television executives was regarded as beyond the pale by the vast majority of racing's rulers.

Racing, pages 48, 49

New chief of Opera House sought board's full backing

BY DALYA ALBERGE

THE new head of the Royal Opera House yesterday rejected any suggestion that her predecessor had left because of a dispute, and welcomed the "fabulous opportunity" in work with the company.

Mary Allen, 46, resigns as head of the Arts Council in September to take over as chief executive of the House after the unexpected resignation of Geraint McIntosh. A statement issued earlier this week said that Ms McIntosh had resigned due to ill health. Ms Allen dismissed as "nonsense" the suggestion that there had been disagreement between Lord Chiddingfold, chairman of the House, and Ms McIntosh over the

Ms McIntosh. "I know for a fact that that's not true. I was thrilled when she got the job. Lord Chiddingfold said how brilliant she's been and how he wanted her to stay."

But Ms Allen disclosed in an interview with *The Times* that she had insisted on getting unanimous backing from the board before she would agree to accept the post. She had needed time to think about taking the position after Ms McIntosh resigned just four months into the job.

Chris Smith, the National Heritage Secretary, has ordered urgent talks about the future of the House. Mr Smith has given assurances over the

£214 million redevelopment of the Covent Garden site.

Ms Allen said that Lord Chiddingfold had told her of Ms McIntosh's illness a fortnight ago. They later met again and he broke the news of her departure; he invited Ms Allen to take up the post. "I thought for a day or two and wrote a letter to him saying 'I'm only prepared to go to the Opera House if the whole board is really enthusiastic.' She was given that assurance and offered the job early this week."

The House is making 320 people redundant from July, when its Covent Garden home closes for two-and-a-half years for the redevelopment.

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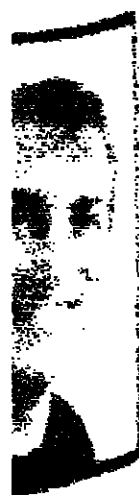
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Scott urges more 'no win, no fee' litigation

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A BIG expansion in "no win, no fee" litigation and "no incentives to encourage litigation" insurance was called for yesterday by the head of civil justice.

In an attempt to widen access to justice, Sir Richard Scott, head of the High Court's Chancery Division, also called on Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, to abolish the policy that courts finance themselves through fees charged to litigants.

He challenged the tradition that the loser pays the winner's costs and suggested that bodies that financed litigation, such as the Legal Aid Board, should not be immune from paying costs of failed actions.

One obstacle preventing people from exercising their constitutional right to the courts was the cost of lawyers' fees, Sir Richard said. But reforms to civil litigation proposed last year by Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, would not "realistically" do more than save money at the margins of the problem, he said.

Instead, some "basic propositions" had to be rethought, he told a conference in London of the County Court Advisers Group, a section of the Advice Services Alliance. He said "no win, no fee" litigation, under which lawyers charged nothing if they lost but increased their normal fees by up to 100 per cent if they won, had

proved successful. At present it was confined to personal injury, debt recovery and human rights cases. Sir Richard said he would like the Lord Chancellor to authorise its extension to most civil disputes — tort, contract and all arbitration proceedings.

He would like greater use of litigation insurance, encouraged by tax incentives. "Just as health insurance schemes are sometimes offered as part of a remuneration package to employees, I would like to see employers offering litigation cost insurance to employees as part of an employment package."

Sir Richard said that the policy of the winner having his costs paid by the loser was meant to discourage "blackmail" litigation. But in the United States there was no such rule and some felt it would have a "positively unconstitutional" effect on access to justice.

"There is a good deal to be said for a new approach to costs, under which the loser is not required to pay the winner's costs unless, or to the extent that, the prosecution of the case had been unreasonable." That would prevent blackmail litigation and would encourage sensible compromises, he added.

In a further proposal, he said that where litigation was financed by a body such as the Legal Aid Board and an action was unsuccessful, they should have to pay the costs of the winner. The same might apply to lawyers acting under conditional fees if they funded an unsuccessful action.

Sir Richard called on the Lord Chancellor to ditch the policy by which courts are self-financing and cover their costs, including the costs of the judges' salaries, through fees charged to litigants. The policy was inconsistent with the principles that ought to underpin the justice system and with the constitutional role of the courts, he said.



Scott's encouragement for litigation insurance



In seal heaven: Nuisance surfaces in the cooling tank of Dungeness B nuclear station after being sucked down an inlet pipe from the sea

Dilemma for Kent nuclear power station where fish have gained seal of approval

By WILLIAM ELLISON

A NUCLEAR power station is planning to shut down its reactors, at a cost of millions of pounds, to save a seal called Nuisance trapped in a waterway used to cool its reactors.

The female grey seal is believed to have become trapped after being sucked down an intake pipe that runs a quarter of a mile out to sea. It has been in the reservoir for ten days and appears to be having a whale of a time because the tank is full of fish.

According to Martin Weeks, the plant production manager of Dungeness B nuclear station on the Kent coast, there are probably more fish per cubic metre in the tank than anywhere in the North Sea. The seal heaven — where Nuisance is gorging itself — supplies cooling water for the turbines.

Mr Weeks said yesterday: "The reservoir is too dangerous for staff to enter but is all right for seals, who are designed for swimming in strong currents." He added

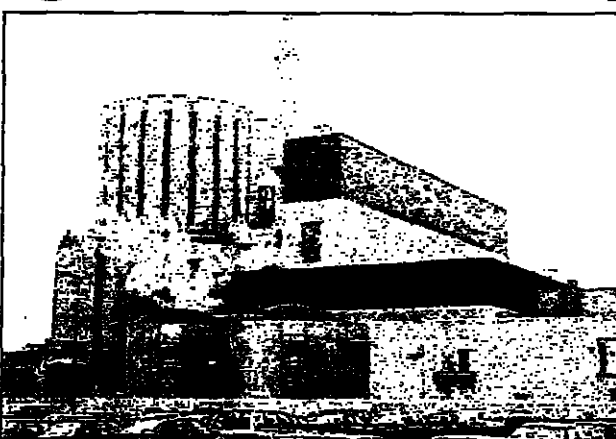


The seal contemplates the sheer sides of the reservoir at Dungeness B

that "the seal is more important than the electricity" and that he was prepared to close the nuclear plant to allow rescuers to save the animal if all else failed.

He has called in the British Marine Divers' Rescue Organisation, a voluntary group licensed to capture seals, to advise on the dilemma.

"The seal cannot get any further," Mr Weeks said. "There are screens in place to



said: "At the moment the seal is not causing any commercial difficulties. The plant is on full production. The safety of the staff is the main concern. We do not want any heroes."

He was unable to say what the cost of shutting down the plant would be but it would be in the millions. One of the two reactors at the station is shut for several weeks every year for safety testing, allowing maintenance work to be carried out. Any stoppage now would mean that the annual shut-down would have to be shortened, Mr Weeks said.

"I may make a management decision with the staff to carry out the maintenance work now rather than later, and this may limit the commercial loss," Mr Weeks believes the seal entered the intake pipe through a grill damaged in a storm.

Nuisance has a supporter in Mr Weeks's ten-year-old daughter, Anna, who is monitoring the situation closely. "I will not be very popular if this does not work out," he said.

Warm water from the turbines is then passed back down to the sea. Mr Weeks

Detective deplores silence of road rage witnesses

By STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

THE underworld is protecting the killer of the road rage victim Stephen Cameron out of misguided loyalty or fear, the detective leading the investigation said yesterday.

The anniversary of the murder falls on Monday. Detective Superintendent Nick Biddiss said that there were witnesses with key information about the stabbing of Mr Cameron, during an argument on an M25 interchange in Kent, who were refusing to help police. Others were "economic in their recollection of the truth" and some "told us lies".

Mr Biddiss was speaking after the victim's parents, Ken and Toni Cameron, described in *The Times* yesterday their continued grief and dread of the anniversary. Mr Cameron's girlfriend, Danielle Cable, 18, in whose arms he died, now lives with them.

Mr Biddiss said that they had "gone through hell in the last year" and he appealed to potential witnesses to examine their consciences. There was "a wall of silence" over some aspects of the case.

"There are people out there who could enable us to bring this investigation to a very early resolution," Mr Biddiss said. They were "not necessarily mainline criminals but people who, from fear, misguided loyalty or esoteric reasons of their own, will not talk to us".

He said that they had information about the driver of the dark blue Land Rover Discovery used by the killer. Others knew about events on the day of the murder or what happened to the vehicle. Mr Biddiss suspected that it had been destroyed in a scrapyard.

In the past year Kent police have traced more than 17,000 Discovery vehicles that meet the description. The only one outstanding is registered to Anthony Francis of Bexley, Kent, a name used by Kenneth Noye, the Brink's-Mat gold robber who vanished on the day of the murder. Mr Biddiss said that he would like to eliminate Mr Noye from his inquiries.

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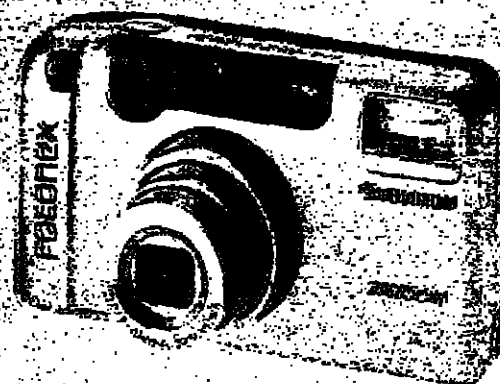
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Dalya Alberge writes from Cannes on the importance of Europe gaining a bigger box office share

Puttnam declares war on US cultural imperialism

EUROPEAN film-makers must fight back to protect the Continent's cultural identities in the face of growing domination by Hollywood, Sir David Puttnam said yesterday. The leading British producer said that the cinema shaped attitudes and values, and that America was eclipsing Europe.

Nations that lost their confidence and sense of identity became destabilised, he said, and drew on an ancient Chinese proverb: "If we continue down this path we appear to have chosen, the danger exists that we will end up exactly where we seem to be heading."

Speaking at the Cannes Film Festival to launch his new book on the subject, *The Undeclared War*, Sir David pointed out that every aspect of film was invented in Europe. He reiterated proposals that he originally outlined in 1991 for a levy on video rentals and films electronically transmitted. Ten pence on every rental, he said, could be invested in training programmes while a second levy would be ploughed back into domestic productions. That



Cultural rivals: Hollywood's Sylvester Stallone as Rambo, and Ben Cross in *Chariots of Fire*

way, the British industry could train film-makers to make more British films and compete in the global market. Sir David also announced that he was working with the director Hugh Hudson again for the first time since *Chariots of Fire*, which won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1981. They are making *A World of Moss*, about "a young boy's coming of age in a highly eccentric Scottish household". It stars Colin Firth, best known for the television version of *Pride and Prejudice*,

and Malcolm McDowell, whose films include *A Clockwork Orange*. It is being shot entirely in Scotland. It is scripted by Simon Donald, who won the Evening Standard Awards most promising newcomer award in 1984. Sir David said he had read the script on a plane: "I was screaming my head off with laughter." The moment they landed he made a call and bought the rights. Sir David, whose classic films include *Midnight Express* and *The Killing Fields*,

said of cinema's influence on cultures: "It is frankly dangerous to allow Hollywood's extraordinary dominance in the field to go on intensifying."

He called on the American studios to become good global citizens, contributing to the fabric of different nations rather than purely imposing their culture on them. There remained "an underlying appetite for dramatic material rooted in our own cultures", he added.

"Movies are more than fun, and more than big business. They are power. They can help to create a healthy, informed, concerned and inquisitive society, or a negative, apathetic, ignorant one."

"If we treat them simply as so many consumer industries, rather than as complex cultural phenomena, then we are likely to damage irreversibly the health and vitality of our own society."

A realistic target, he suggested, would be to increase the share of box office earned by British movies from its present derisory 7-8 per cent to around 15 per cent over the course of a decade.



Sir David Puttnam at Cannes. "It is dangerous to allow Hollywood's dominance to intensify," he said

Hollywood takes a swing at epic Old English poem

BY OUR ARTS CORRESPONDENT

HOLLYWOOD is adapting the oldest known poem in English literature for the big screen. *Beowulf*, whose origins are believed to date from the 8th century, will star Christopher Lambert, who made his name after appearing as Tarzan in Hugh Hudson's *Greystoke*.

The actor, whose previous roles have also included the immortal time traveller in the *Highlander* trilogy, said that as many as five American studios had made unsuccessful attempts to create a film from the poem. This screenplay, he said, had finally got it right.

The folk epic, in 3,183 lines of Old English, is regarded as the most significant relic from the Anglo-Saxon period and is the oldest poem in any modern language. It tells the story of Beowulf, a young warrior, and his tragic battle against the flesh-eating monster Grendel and its equally grotesque mother. The poem survives in only one version, in a manuscript in the British

Library, presumed to date from the year 1000.

Lambert, who was at the Cannes Film Festival to launch his latest movie *Nirvana*, a futuristic story about a virtual-reality mind game, said that *Beowulf* needed to combine action with emotion. "The action is easy. The most difficult thing in *Highlander* was not chopping people's heads off but the emotion. In *Beowulf*, it is trying to make a movie about the pain this guy has, the emotion, the fight against his dark side."

He said that the film would not sacrifice the story to the special effects. "It was the emotional side that attracted me. First emotion, then action and adventure."

The actor, who was born in New York and brought up in Geneva by French parents, said that the adaptation of the original was both faithful and subtle. "There is not going to be a dragon but a creature you never even see. The power of movies like *Jaws* or *Alien* is that you feel it but you never really see it. If you saw the shark in the beginning of *Jaws*, the movie would be over."

The film is to be produced by Larry Kasanoff, who made *Mortal Kombat* and *Platoon*. A director has yet to be announced, as has the location. "We need a 16th-century castle, which they don't have in the States," Lambert said. "I would love to shoot in Scotland, where *Highlander* was filmed, or Ireland."

"The nature in Scotland is unbelievable. It is one of the most beautiful places I've seen."



Lambert would like to shoot film in Scotland

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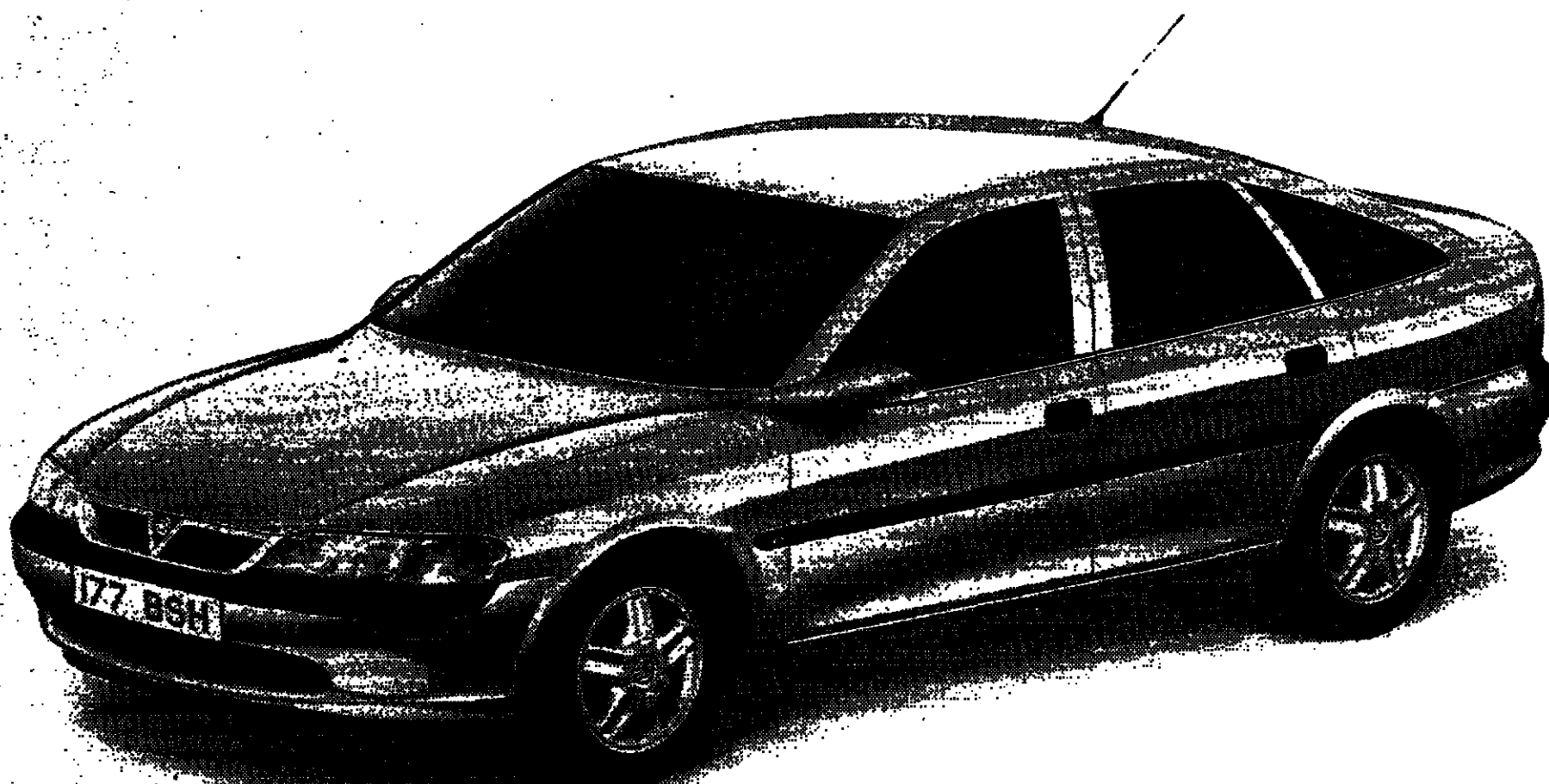
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By AUDREY MAGEE, IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

Mr Ahern, 45, is portraying himself in the election campaign as the "young leader of a young country", promising to put people before politics. He came tantalisingly close to winning the title in 1994 when the Fianna Fail/Labour coalition

Mr Athern is also promising a "zero tolerance" attitude to crime. He said that, as Prime Minister, he would create 2,000 extra prison places and bring the police up to their full complement of 17,000.



By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

Last week Mrs Goldie made strenuous efforts to end the party's public bickering as the anti-devolution consensus

"Montgomery, and Eisenhower plotted the D-Day landings in a tent, so I don't see anything unusual in planning the reclamation of Scotland from a marquee," Mr Bell said. "This is meant to be a think-tank. We have suffered the worst defeat in our history and there are fundamental things we need to address, such as how do we build a positive Conservative platform."

Mr Bell was linked to the downfall of Sir Michael Hirst, the former party chairman, who resigned at the start of the election campaign over allegations of a homosexual affair. Sir Michael claimed last week he had been betrayed by members of his own party but refused to mention names. However, it emerged that Mr Bell had alerted the party hierarchy about Sir Michael's alleged past affair. Mr Bell said that he had been 'the unwelcome messenger'.

As well as future policy, the two-day gathering in Perth is expected to discuss changes to party organisation.

Magnus Linklater, page 22

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BY JAMES LANDALE, POLITICAL REPORTER

The move is the first indication of how the Tories intend to fight the proposals despite Labour's large Commons majority.

By PHILIP WEBSTER

Papworth Travel Goods have made him four boxes

which are wider than those used for more than 250 years. They took the opportunity to add new features, including a pocket for his mobile phone, dictation machine and cassette tapes. They were sent to him over the weekend.

Simon Knocker, the sales manager, said it took the company five working days to complete the task. "We saw it as an opportunity for us to bid for a contract. We contacted his office and were given the chance to give it a go. They were looking for a very tight deadline."

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Hague promises immediate vote for the grassroots

By Philip Webster
Political Editor

WILLIAM HAGUE has offered Conservatives an early chance to back him or sack him if he is chosen to replace John Major next month. He promised yesterday that he would quickly convene a meeting for the party's membership to confirm or reject his selection as leader.

He said: "Should I be elected leader of the party by fellow MPs I will as quickly as possible call a special conference representative of the whole party."

"At that conference a ballot would be held at which I would seek a mandate, and I would not continue as leader without it."

His promise came as his leadership rival Stephen Dorrell suggested that the Conservative Party should choose between him and William Hague if it wanted to break free from the failure of the past five years. The former Health Secretary challenged Mr Hague to a face-to-face debate before an audience of



Dorrell said the choice was him or Hague

Tory members, implying that the other four contenders belonged to the past.

In the first formal news conference of his campaign, Mr Dorrell, 45, said that he and Mr Hague, the former Welsh Secretary, offered a choice to take a leader from "the next generation".

Mr Hague is 36 — the youngest of the six candidates standing for election. He later

turned down the challenge of a debate, saying that it might be divisive.

Mr Dorrell said: "I am happy to debate with anybody but I seek a specific debate with William because I get a very clear message that the Conservative Party wants to move on to the next agenda."

"I and William share a commitment to break free from what has been an unsuccessful history in the last Parliament and set a new programme for the election."

Mr Dorrell appeared to be pooh-poohing some of his opponents. He said that John Redwood, who had not been in the Cabinet since 1995, was "very much associated with the arguments which did us so much damage during the last Parliament. I don't believe Conservative supporters in the country sense that John represents a clean break from the arguments of the past."

Of the former Home Secretary Michael Howard, Mr Dorrell said he had got on "perfectly well" in government. "He is an experienced minister but I don't believe that, because of his long career, he offers the same opportunity for a clean break and a rebuilding from the foundations up that the younger candidates offer."

"Clearly William and I both share a commitment to rebuild the Conservative Party. But we are different people. We would go about it in a different way. The party must understand the differences between our personalities... the differences of nuance."

He made the democratisation of the Tory party a central plank of his campaign, promising that under his leadership the party would have a new constitution within a year, requiring the leader to face regular re-election with party members having a say.

Mr Dorrell said there were three essential building blocks for the party's future: competitive liberal economics to create wealth for society, a clear view on the future of Europe — as a competitive, open market, and a more flexible union of sovereign nation states — "and we must reclaim the epithet of one nation".



Jack Straw has a close encounter yesterday with a scissor-wielding inmate of Winchester prison. The Home Secretary was being shown around a prison where women prisoners practise their hairdressing skills on fellow inmates. With a pack of photographers crying for a good shot, 26-year-old

Straw has close shave in jail

Elaine held a pair of scissors just an inch from Mr Straw's already neat sideburns. The Home Secretary did not flinch as she told him: "Let me cut your hair and you'll always come back." Mr

Straw, who was making his first visit to a jail since becoming Home Secretary, replied: "Well done for chutzpah." Another inmate, 54-year-old Jeanette, who was in the middle of having her

hair styled, congratulated Mr Straw on Labour's election victory and then complained about delays in having appeals against conviction and sentence heard. Mr Straw gave a non-committal

response, saying that action was being taken to address delays. But he said that he appreciated her congratulations and added: "We had to wait a long time to get into government. It was a long stretch for us, too." Winchester's Victorian prison houses about 80 women and 530 men.

Court fight by Tory who thinks he won

By Jill Sherman, Chief Political Correspondent

A TORY Health Minister who lost his Commons seat by two votes is mounting a High Court challenge to force another count. The action by Gerry Malone could mean a rerun of the election for voters in Winchester, Hampshire.

Mr Malone lost the constituency to Mark Oaten, a Liberal Democrat, after two recounts. The ousted Conservative is particularly concerned that 55 ballot papers were rejected as void because they did not have an official mark that should be stamped on all papers.

Yesterday Mr Malone said that after taking legal advice, he had decided to lodge a petition in the High Court to seek a recount or scrutiny of the votes recorded in the election. He said: "It is my

understanding that a majority of void ballots were cast in my favour and, had they been counted, I would have won the election. My purpose is to ensure that the result properly reflects the intentions of voters."

Mr Oaten said: "Mr Malone is now seeking through the courts to overturn the will of the people of Winchester."

Mr Malone may be helped by legal precedent in the case of Billie Morgan, a Tory candidate defeated by nine votes in the 1973 Greater London Council election. She protested that if votes declared void because of the absence of the mark had been counted, she would have won. A ruling by Lord Denning resulted in a fresh election in 1974, which she won comfortably.

Suicide overshadows debut visit to prison

By Stewart Tendler
Crime Correspondent

JACK STRAW's first visit to a prison as Home Secretary was marred yesterday when an inmate committed suicide in his cell just hours before his arrival. Shaun Harvey, 22, was found by Winchester Prison staff shortly after 6am, hanged in his single cell by a bed sheet attached to cell bars. He had left a note.

Harvey, the twentieth prisoner to kill himself this year, was sentenced to a three-month sentence for drugs, theft and assault on Wednesday.

As Mr Straw toured the prison he said the death was a profoundly depressing situation for all concerned. He offered his sympathies to the mother of the prisoner and recalled

that when he was at school a classmate committed suicide. It was an experience which he said had "remained with me all of my life".

Mr Straw was referring to the death of a boy called Peter Hartley, 15, who gassed himself in May 1963 at Brentwood School. An inquest was told that he may have killed himself because he was agonising over being a homosexual.

The boy crept down at night and killed himself in a study in Orway House shared by Mr Straw and several other pupils. Mr Straw was told about the death the next day and glimpsed the body. During his visit the Home Secretary confirmed he planned measures to stabilise the soaring prison population, which now totals 60,431. He said he would be

examining ways of cutting the length of time defendants spent in jail on remand awaiting trial and would also cut the number of fine defaulters who were sent to prison.

"I don't want to see anybody in prison who can be sensibly punished for their crimes outside and do not pose a danger to the public. If we are to achieve that, we have to raise confidence in community punishments. It's because of declining confidence that I think many sentences decided to shift from community punishments to prison."

The Home Secretary said too many defendants spent too long on remand awaiting trial. About 20 per cent of inmates in England and Wales were awaiting trial and Mr Straw said he was looking at a variety of proposals to

reduce delays. He said he was interested in the Scottish system of remand population control. Under that scheme remand inmates cannot be held in custody beyond 110 days without trial.

Mr Straw also made it clear he has not entirely rejected the idea of using HMP Weare, the prison ship moored at Portland harbour in Dorset. Later he visited the ship and said a final decision on using it had yet to be made. He said he would hear representations from local councillors, who have opposed the vessel, and study a report from a marine expert prepared for the Prison Officers' Association. Mr Straw said the alternative to the ship would be to use police cells, which would be unacceptable. The size of the accommodation on the ship was better than many prisons including Winchester.

Move to ban smoking in Parliament

TONY BLAIR might have got rid of the smoke-filled rooms that characterised old Labour but now one of his MPs wants to go even further and inject some fresh air into the fume-filled House of Commons (James Landale writes).

John Austin, MP for Eritrea and Thamesmead, has tabled

a Commons motion calling for a smoking ban throughout the Palace of Westminster. Smoking is banned in the Commons chamber, in select and standing committee rooms, and the Members' Lobby. It is, however, allowed in many other meeting rooms, in the committee corridor where many MPs

do constituency work, in parts of the Commons library, the Central Lobby and some public areas, including the bars and restaurants.

Mr Austin said he hoped to capitalise on the Government's plans to ban tobacco advertising by making the Commons a smoke-free zone.

The only exceptions would be the Strangers' Bar and the Members' Smoking Room.

Many veteran MPs on both sides of the House are smokers and they are likely to block any attempt to ban their habit. The matter is a question for the Commons Administration Committee.

Prescott has hard choices over future of transport

By Michael Binyon

JOHN PRESCOTT, the Deputy Prime Minister and environment supremo, will this weekend analyse the difficult choices for roads and railways that were laid before him by his transport ministers at a policy-making meeting at Chevening yesterday.

The transport team must decide soon what kind of enhanced regulatory authority it wants to supervise the privatised railways; whether to cut further the road-building programme; and how the demands of transport and the environment can be better reconciled. But the most immediate decision is on the future of London Underground.

The huge cuts in funds for the Underground, announced by Kenneth Clarke last November, have left the system short of £700 million in infrastructure investment. The Underground announced the immediate scrapping of dozens of capital projects and the indefinite postponement of many improvements.

During the election campaign Labour flatly ruled out the "wholesale privatisation" of the system, a proposal finally made by Sir George Young, the Tory Transport Secretary, on the eve of the campaign. Labour spokesmen insisted that improving public transport would be a priority, but gave no indication where to find the money.

Mr Prescott has now been given three options by the Underground: keeping it in the public sector with a huge injection of investment over

the next five years; bringing in private money to pay for repairs under the Private Finance Initiative; or privatising the system, either wholly or by keeping London Transport as a regulatory authority and contracting out the running of the services.

All three are being studied by Glenda Jackson, the minister responsible for railway operations. The first would swallow up to £400 million a year in capital spending for five years. The Underground says it would then be self-financing, able to generate from its own receipts the funds needed for capital costs. The obstacles are Gordon Brown and the Treasury.

The private finance option is unrealistic. The Underground already makes more use of such finance than any other state-run undertaking. The money would still have to be repaid.

The third option would stick in the throats of many leftwingers and Londoners. A single monopoly handed to the private sector would not stimulate competition. Separating track from train operations, like the break-up of British Rail, would be extremely difficult in such an interlinked system. Finding investors might be difficult.

Finally, Mr Prescott knows that with project after project being axed because the money has dried up, London voters will not wait long before demanding a reversal of Mr Clarke's cuts.

Leading article, page 23

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Face to face with a dictator: President Mobutu celebrating 25 years of independence in June 1985, left; feted by fellow despot Idi Amin, the Ugandan President, in 1972; and feeling the strain during the endgame of his reign this month.

Three decades of chaos under lord of misrule



Sam Kiley charts the rise and fall of President Mobutu of Zaire, the longest-ruling of modern Africa's kleptocrats

MOBUTU SESE SÉKO yesterday slipped out of Kinshasa and power in Zaire after 32 years of rule for which he will be remembered as a brutal despot, a brilliant manipulator and one of the greatest thieves of the 20th century, for whom chaos has always been a magic word.

Joseph-Désiré Mobutu — as he was called until he "Africanised" his name in 1972 — came from humble origins in the Equateur province in the north of a colony left in a shambles by its Belgian masters who fled, leaving only 16 indigenous graduates in a country 80 times the size of their own.

For the young non-commis-sioned officer, who had started out as a freelance reporter for a French press agency, the uprising against Belgian officers in newly independent Congo, and chaos which fol-lowed, was a golden opportu-nity. Patrice Lumumba, the

left-wing Prime Minister, raised him to the rank of colonel at the age of only 30, and made him head of the armed forces which Belgian officers feared to lead.

Largely ineffective as a military leader, the young Colonel Mobutu developed a sense of opportunity. In 1961, after the country was torn apart by secessionist rebellions and arguments between Lumumba and Joseph Kasavubu, the President, he took power in a military coup and ruled for a year in which he discovered he was too young for absolute power but developed a taste for its trappings.

The Congo continued to be riven by civil wars and secessionist uprisings in Kivu and Katanga (now Shaba) until 1965, when Mr Mobutu saw his greatest chance, again the result of chaotic politics and rowing between Moïse Tshombe, the Prime Minister, and Kasavubu. This time he

Kabila's henchmen prepare for power

BY DAVID ORR

PRESIDENT Mobutu will be succeeded by a transitional authority which will run Zaire for an unspecified period until elections take place, according to the proposals

Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader, agreed in talks with President Mandela of South Africa and Muhammad Sahnoun, the United Nations special envoy, to give Mr Mobutu until Monday to study the proposals.

Mr Kabila, whose rebels control three-quarters of Zaire, returned to his Lubum-

stepped out of the wings and remained at the centre stage of Central Africa's political drama until yesterday.

Washington, fearing the spread of communism in Africa, was delighted with the arrival of Mr Mobutu in the presidential palace. He had been working with the CIA.

bashi headquarters last night and began an immediate meeting with his "Cabinet". It is understood that Mr Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire will dominate the interim authority.

The only concession offered to the cancer-stricken dictator is that he can stay in the country once he stands down. Although he has repeatedly confounded popular opinion by returning home after seeking medical treatment in Europe and attending peace talks in Congo, the ailing President is thought unlikely to accept the offer.

which was alleged to have been behind the murder of Lumumba. His pro-capitalist inclinations would mean that the Congo's vast mineral wealth would be kept beyond the Kremlin's grasp. The West was anxious that he remain at the helm of the Congo and turned a blind eye to political



Laurent Kabila, who ended the Mobutu era

Mr Mobutu was revealed by a member of his family who explained how his close associates made their millions by "ripping off the old man".

"Mobutu would ask one of us to go to the bank and take out a million. We'd go to an intermediary and tell him to get five million; he would go to the bank with Mobutu's authority, and take out ten. Mobutu got one, and we took the other nine," he said chuckling over a beer in Kinshasa before his "cash cow" left.

But opposition to his rule continued to threaten to undermine Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga, the name he took when he banned "Christian" names and "Western dress", which he replaced with Nehru-style suits in 1972. The year before he had changed the name of the Congo to Zaire.

In 1977 he faced another armed uprising in Katanga from remnants of Tshombe's defeated gendarmes. The West might have let him be toppled, but Washington needed Zaire as a base for covert operations with the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) next door. France and Morocco sent troops to put down the rebellion. Safe in the

knowledge that the Cold War would keep him in power, Mr Mobutu continued to extend his cult of personality by spreading rumours that he had cuckolded his opponents.

Members of his family still believe that Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of Zaire's civilian opposition, hates the Big Man because "he did it with Etienne's wife on the kitchen table in front of the servants", as a former Information Minister put it.

With the end of the Cold War, he lost his support from the West and turned for solace to a team of 25 witch doctors from Benin and Senegal. They told him to ignore the symptoms of prostate cancer, which has now spread to his bones.

For most of this decade he took a back seat, manipulating his opponents from behind the scenes and, when they got too powerful, by ordering his troops to tear Zaire's major cities to pieces in looting rampages in 1991 and 1993.

But the hubris and rule by chaos was his ultimate undoing. His nemesis, Laurent Kabila, grew out of a Tutsi rebellion in South Kivu, 1,000 miles from the capital, and exposed the myth of Zaire as a functioning state.

Property empire spans tastes and continents

Geneva: The property empire of President Mobutu stretches across continents and ranges from a prestigious Paris address to a gaudy palace in Goma with plastic chandeliers.

The man who diplomats allege could pay off Zaire's entire debt with a personal cheque has more than 20 luxury properties in the West and a Swiss fortune once

worth \$4 billion (£2.5 billion), according to Swiss media. The Swiss villa in Savigny, bought by Mr Mobutu in 1968 for his first wife, Marie-Antoinette, who later died, contains 30 rooms and is set in vast grounds with a swimming pool and outbuildings. Its market value is \$5.5 million, according to Swiss federal police.

In Morocco, a property agent said Mr

Mobutu had a major construction project under way in the southern city of Marrakesh, worth \$10 million. He also has a lavish property and flats in Brussels and a holiday home in the South of France. In addition, he owns an estate in Portugal, while his Spanish interests include a luxury villa and hotel in Marbella and a home in Madrid. (Reuters)

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 p.a. year 2, 13.00% gross p.a. year 3
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 p.a. year 2, 13.50% gross p.a. year 3
 Cash bonus of £12,000
 0800 000 222
 For £235,000 or more - guaranteed
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 p.a. year 2, 13.75% gross p.a. year 3
 Cash bonus of £12,500
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 For £245,000 or more - guaranteed
 12.00% gross p.a. year 1, 13.00% gross
 p.a. year 2, 14.00% gross p.a. year 3
 Cash bonus of £13,000
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 p.a. year 2, 14.25% gross p.a. year 3
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 For £265,000 or more - guaranteed
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 p.a. year 2, 14.50% gross p.a. year 3
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 p.a. year 2, 14.75% gross p.a. year 3
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 p.a. year 2, 15.00% gross p.a. year 3
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Colonel admits medals deceit

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

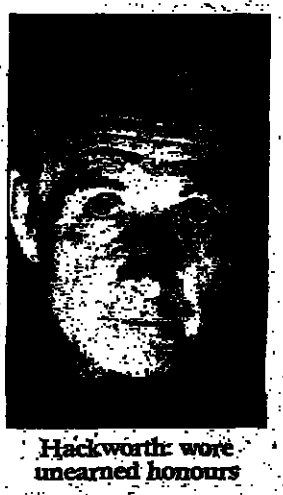
THE soldier-turned-journalist who hounded the US Navy's top-ranking officer, Admiral Mike Boorda, over the use of unauthorised combat medals, has conceded that he has also worn decorations that he did not earn. Boorda killed himself after the affair was made public.

Colonel David Hackworth told a television news programme that he was not entitled to wear two Distinguished Flying Crosses or his "Ranger tab". Military sources have confirmed that Colonel Hackworth has gained only one DFC. The "tab" indicates that he completed one of the army's most gruelling training courses, which he did not.

The colonel sought to "clarify the discrepancy" by saying his Wolfhound Raiders, a unit in Korea, had been issued mistakenly with "tabs".

He has also claimed to have served with the 8th Army Rangers in Korea, but his name is not on the records. Sergeant Charles Pitt, a member of the unit, told CBS News yesterday: "He was never a member of that company and couldn't possibly have been."

The beleaguered journalist has now sought refuge behind the excuse that he made "an honest mistake". Ironically, this was a plea that he would not accept when he reported on the military past of Boorda.



Hackworth wore unearned honours

Clinton minimum wage call stirs up row on 'workfare'

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

THE White House has called for people in "workfare" programmes to be paid the minimum wage, inflaming the row over one of the most contentious parts of America's welfare reform experiment and drawing furious reactions from Republican and Democratic state governors.

The outcome will be watched closely by the Blair Government, which has drawn on American ideas for its proposed shake-up of the welfare state and also supports a minimum wage.

Governors and authors of last year's Republican-backed welfare reform laws said that the White House's long-awaited interpretation could jeopardise the nationwide experiment.

Under "workfare" schemes, people must perform community service or public-sector work in order to receive welfare. Workfare is generally directed towards poorer, less employable people than the "welfare-to-work" scheme, which aims to prise people off welfare and into proper jobs.

Under the new laws, states are allowed enormous discretion over designing incentives to reduce welfare rolls. At their most radical, such as in Wisconsin, these schemes cut off benefits entirely after five years. According to President Clinton's proposal, people per-

forming workfare would be credited with the minimum wage of \$4.75 (£2.90) an hour. To receive the average welfare benefit of about \$370 a month, they would have to work only 19 hours a week.

Critics of Mr Clinton's decision rushed to point out that it apparently contradicts the new welfare laws, which require people to work 20 hours a week in 1997, rising to 30 hours by 2000. Some argued yesterday that the White House was wrong to treat workfare jobs as proper jobs, when many of them were "make work" tasks in the local community, such as sweeping streets or raking leaves.

The decision was widely seen as a peace offering by the

White House to the labour unions which have seen many of their favourite causes jettisoned as Mr Clinton has moved the Democratic agenda towards the centre. Leaders of the public service unions have put their jobs on the line over the issue.

Although welfare reform may offer the unions a chance to recruit new members, they see this as poor compensation for the threats the reforms may pose to existing workers. They have bitterly opposed workfare on the ground that it allows state governments to employ non-union members at below the minimum wage.

Mr Clinton's decision, which is likely to be challenged by governors, is the second victory in a week for the unions. In New York, a state judge ruled on Monday that workfare participants must be paid the "prevailing wage" for public-sector employees, up to \$9 an hour.

Unions and state governors are now urgently investigating whether other labour laws, such as unemployment insurance, will also cover people in workfare schemes.

Meanwhile, a new government study of the nationwide welfare reforms found that 18,000 families had been pushed off the welfare rolls in the past few years because they failed to find work.

Gingrich starts to pay ethics fine

Washington: Newt Gingrich has paid the first \$50,000 (£31,000) of his \$300,000 ethics fine out of his personal funds (Bronwen Maddox writes). The Speaker of the House of Representatives said that he will borrow no more than \$150,000 from Bob Dole, the former Republican presidential candidate, who offered to lend him the entire amount.

Shining Path bombs mark terror birthday

BY GABRIELLA GAMINI, SOUTH AMERICA CORRESPONDENT

PERU's most ruthless terror group, the Maoist Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) is marking the 17th anniversary of its founding by detonating a series of car bombs across the country.

The explosions, which have left more than 30 people injured and dozens of public buildings destroyed, are for many Peruvians a sign that the rebel group is making a comeback after months of military setbacks.

"The days of terrorist violence are far from over. We had hoped they were over, but it was a illusion," said Ricardo Letis, a veteran politician.

Sendero was waiting for the right moment to return to its violent ways and chose its anniversary date.

The Shining Path began its armed campaign on May 17, 1980, by burning ballot-boxes in a tiny Andean village. The rebels' campaign has claimed 30,000 lives.

In September 1992 Shining Path's founder, Abimael Guzman, was captured. He is being held in isolation in an underground complex. But poverty-stricken Peru remains a fertile breeding ground for guerrilla groups.

'Unabomber' pleas spurned

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

AMERICAN prosecutors will seek the death penalty for the Unabomber suspect, despite anguished appeals for his life to be spared from the relatives who turned him in.

They begged for leniency for Theodore Kaczynski, saying they believe him to be mentally ill and sought compassionate consideration because they had made his capture possible. But families of several of the "Unabomber's" victims praised the decision.

Mr Kaczynski, 54, a former mathematics professor at Berkeley, is suspected in an 18-year string of letter-bombs

that killed three people and injured 23 others. The nationwide hunt by FBI had been fruitless and they would never have arrested Mr Kaczynski without a tip from his brother, David, and his mother, Wanda. The family had recognised chilling similarities between the Unabomber's 35,000-word manifesto ranting against technology and ideas expressed by Mr Kaczynski, whose early targets were universities.

Anthony Bisceglie, a lawyer for the family, said Mr Kaczynski's brother and mother were devastated by the

death penalty decision and were in seclusion. He said when David Kaczynski first came forward he expressed concern about his brother's well-being after years of mental illness.

Janet Reno, President Clinton's Attorney-General, personally opposes the death penalty but authorised her prosecutors to seek it in the Unabomber case. Officials said her decision was based on the premeditated nature of the crimes, the suspect's lack of remorse and the way the bombs were built to cause serious injuries or death.



Stu Ungar, 43, a professional gambler from Las Vegas, after winning the World Series of Poker title and the accompanying \$1 million prize at one of the casinos in the town. Mr Ungar has won the poker title twice before, in 1980 and 1981

Abortion defeat for President in Senate

BY BRONWEN MADDOX

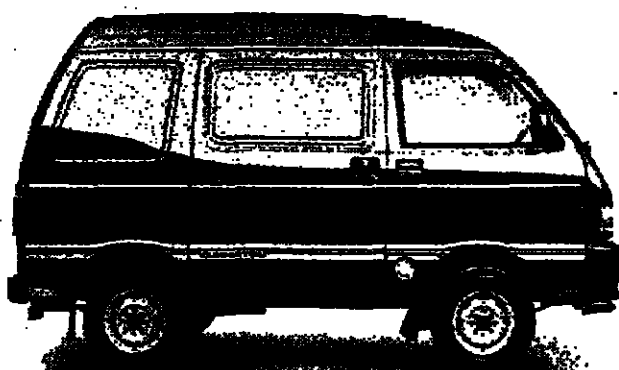
THE US Senate has rejected a White House-backed bid for a moderate curb on abortion rights, clearing the way for a Republican Bill next week which seeks wider curbs and makes no exceptions for the health of the mother.

The abortion debate has been given new impetus by last November's elections, which maintained Republican control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives and replaced several leading moderate Republicans with conservatives.

The Democratic Bill proposed by Tom Daschle, leader of the Democratic senators, was defeated 64-36 after eight hours of impassioned debate. It would have represented a landmark in curtailing abortion rights by banning all abortions after the fetus was "viable", at 23 to 28 weeks.

Mr Clinton backed the Bill because of a clause allowing exceptions when the woman's health was in danger. He has vetoed a previous Republican Bill lacking that clause, and opposes on the same grounds the Republican Bill to be debated next week. That Bill aims to ban "partial birth" abortion, in which the fetus's skull is crushed.

The House has already passed the measure, and the Senate looks likely to pass it. But yesterday it appeared that the Bill would fall short of the two-thirds support needed to override the President's veto.



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China keeps guard against exodus to capitalist colony

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN GUANGZHOU

THE newspaper headline read "Guangdong anti-migration rehearsal" and there were, unusually for China, scenes of heavily armed paramilitary police in steel helmets battling angry young men armed with staves who were breaking down a barbed-wire barrier. "A fight between police and illegal migrants," one picture caption said.

It was, of course, only an exercise — a real demonstration would never be reported in the contemporary Chinese press — and Hong Kong was not mentioned, but it was clearly what the authorities had in mind.

What the pictures showed may be the worst nightmare of provincial Communist Party officials here in Guangzhou, as Canton is now called. But such future attempts to breach the border fence of Hong Kong, which lies 70 miles south of here, cannot be an unimaginable event, or such an exercise would not have been held.

Guangdong province, bordering Hong Kong, was long touted as China's greatest success story. There was even talk then of the Pearl River delta, the high-growth area

north of Hong Kong, joining the four Asian "dragons" of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan.

These days, although salaries are higher here than elsewhere in China and the cranes and the pile-drivers are still working round the clock in Guangzhou, talk is more measured. Zhang Gaoli, the Vice-Governor of this province of 70 million, said that growth in the current five-year plan was an estimated 11 per cent. This is down from 23 per cent in 1993 but still high.

The Shenzhen-Guangzhou six-lane expressway is a superb engineering project. It seems a good way to see the Chinese economic miracle at first hand. But the traveller soon notices that many of the blocks of flats and factories springing up stand empty.

Every second building in Guangdong seems to be a small-scale Caesar's Palace, straight from Las Vegas, one of the foreign cities that a majority of Chinese say they most want to visit. These are vast karaoke emporiums, and during the daylight hours bored young women hang about outside, listlessly waiting for evening when the

clients arrive. Modernisation of industry has been neglected in favour of funds spent on glitzy building projects, and in many towns in Guangdong that problem is only too visible. Some high-profile foreign ventures, such as Peugeot, have not fared well, and acid rain has left the environment in a pitiful state.

Britain, once an "imperialist villain" in local legend, reopened its consulate-general here early this year in a few cramped hotel rooms rather than the spacious buildings of the last century. Ian Wellfare, the consul-general, is upbeat about the city.

"People tend to take one look at Guangzhou, sniff the foul fumes, and give the thumbs down," he said. "Certainly there is a poisonous cocktail of pollution, but Guangzhou is abuzz and its people friendly."

"While there is a problem, and a drop in foreign investment last year attributable to new import taxes and inflation, most foreign businessmen are happy here and growth rates are still high by British standards. There are more than 50 British companies here and more are coming," he added.



Hong Kong marine police put high-speed dinghies through their paces yesterday as part of an unprecedented joint training exercise aimed to fight the transfer of illegal immigrants by smugglers, or "snakeheads". An armada from the colony and China

Security net tightened for 'snakeheads'

engaged trawlers loaded with make-believe illegal immigrants. Eighty vessels were deployed in waters around the Hong Kong-China border

and more than 3,000 Chinese border police held an exercise on land. The sea games in Dapeng Bay trained border police to cope with the

tide of Chinese sneaking into Hong Kong at night ahead of the July 1 handover. With Hong Kong in view on one side and China's Shenzhen city on the other, the two security forces intercepted 21 trawlers used as simulated smuggling vessels. (Reuters)

Beijing plans bigger, better Hong Kong to ease chronic squeeze on land

FROM CATHERINE FIELD IN HONG KONG

HONG KONG'S incoming government, facing a chronic land shortage and a surging population, is contemplating a novel solution: moving part of the territory into China.

After July 1, Hong Kong will come under Chinese sovereignty but will retain its distinct way of life and capitalist system, with an autonomy defined by a border fence running along its colonial boundary with the mainland.

Sources close to Tung Chee-hwa, the Chief Executive-designate, say plans are now advanced for Hong Kong to solve its land crisis by buying a huge swath of Shenzhen, the neighbouring special economic zone, and building on it a vast residential and industrial complex that would be inhabited only by Hong Kong residents.

The area would include schools, supermarkets, hospitals and welfare centres managed along Hong Kong lines. The residents would hold special permits giving them the right to move back to Hong

Kong any time they wanted, but while on Chinese soil they would be subject to the laws of the People's Republic.

The scheme would have the advantage of easing pressure on Hong Kong's housing market while at the same time providing cash for the authorities in Shenzhen. "What I have in mind is to co-operate with Shenzhen, to have a border zone that is in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. We will be able to operate our business much cheaper there than in Hong Kong," said Henry Tang, a member

of Mr Tung's Cabinet-in-waiting and architect of the expansion plan. "The bulk of the money for the project would come from the Hong Kong Housing Association and private developers."

Among his suggestions, Mr Tang has recommended that mainlanders meeting the residency requirements for the territory could live in the Hong Kong enclave while waiting for their final clearance to enter.

"A lot of Hong Kong permanent residents have been waiting for their spouses to come to Hong

Kong for ten years, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel for them. They could live there and have access to Hong Kong services," he said.

Mr Tung has already named housing as a key area for action after he succeeds Chris Patten, the Governor, on July 1. Hong Kong's population of 6.4 million is already one of the most cramped in the world. It is expected to grow by 30 per cent to 8.2 million by 2016, mainly because of an influx of mainlanders. But this figure does not take into account tens of

thousands of Chinese who will have the right to live in Hong Kong after July 1 because spouses or relatives are living in the territory. They face a long and agonising wait because of a system that admits only 150 settlers a day into Hong Kong. Building the Shenzhen complex, whose size and date of completion have not been made clear, would help to clear the backlog of people on this waiting list.

However, the scheme would raise the question of conflict of interest. The cost of infrastructure,

roads and sewerage, and also access to the rest of the mainland, may be borne by Hong Kong. There is already a suspicion in Hong Kong that Beijing views the territory as a fat treasure chest that should be plundered when the motherland needs it.

Despite Hong Kong's wealth, it faces a potentially perilous problem in its shortage of land. Housing prices rose by an average of 30 per cent last year, placing home ownership beyond the dreams of tens of thousands of middle-class families.

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Nationalists spurn hearings after Tutu accuses de Klerk

FROM SAM KILEY IN JOHANNESBURG

SOUTH Africa's National Party was set on a collision course with the commission investigating apartheid-era crimes when the panel's chairman, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, accused former President de Klerk of "gross human rights abuses".

After the outburst the National Party suspended participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and threatened legal action against the archbishop.

Archbishop Tutu choked back tears when he said he was "devastated" by Mr de Klerk's continued refusal to admit he knew of state-sponsored killings while in office. He said there was "an avalanche of information" sent to Mr de Klerk when he was President which detailed murders and torture committed by the security services.

During his first appearance before the commission last year, Mr de Klerk formally apologised for the era of apartheid under his party, but refused to admit that he knew of — much less sanctioned — any criminal acts against anti-apartheid activists.

"I feel sorry for him. I am devastated," Archbishop Tutu said after another appearance by Mr de Klerk at a hearing on Wednesday. "All that is required is to say that 'we believed in this policy, but it is a policy that brought about all

of this suffering. It is a policy that killed people. Not by accident, deliberately. It was planned."

Dr Alex Boraine, deputy chairman of the commission, said that Mr de Klerk's testimony had been contradictory. "It is our view that the National Party must accept political accountability for policies that would inevitably lead to atrocities. If you look at the legislation during the state of emergency, it was a licence to kill."

This week the African National Congress admitted "executing" 23 police agents and nine members of Umkhonto we Sizwe (the ANC's now disbanded military wing).



Israelis attack Hezbollah

Jerusalem: Israeli warplanes flew repeated sorties against suspected Hezbollah strongholds in south Lebanon yesterday (Christopher Walker writes). Earlier, the worst ground exchanges this year had left three Israeli paratroops dead and seven wounded, and killed at least two Hezbollah guerrillas. An Israeli helicopter also

destroyed a Lebanese army vehicle. The air attacks followed a Hezbollah ambush late on Thursday, more than a mile north of the security zone. An Israeli brigadier-general said new Hezbollah weapons had hampered Israeli helicopters. They are believed to be Stinger missiles originally sent to Afghan guerrillas by America.



Mother Teresa is welcomed by nuns of her order on arriving in Rome yesterday to meet the Pope

Mother Teresa is taken ill in Rome

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

MOTHER TERESA of Calcutta, known as the "Saint of the Gutters" for her lifelong work caring for the "lowest of the low" in the Third World, was taken ill on arriving in Rome yesterday for a meeting with the Pope.

Doctors said the 86-year-old nun, who underwent heart surgery three times last year and has lung and kidney disorders, was given oxygen for 20 minutes at Rome airport. But she was "in good spirits" after recovering from the long journey and was resting at a convent of the Missionaries of Charity, the order she founded in 1947.

Mother Teresa, who retired as head of the order in March, will outline to the Pope a plan for "rehabilitating" the thousands of prostitutes who haunt rundown areas of Rome, many of them from Albania. Yesterday she brought four Indian babies to Rome for adoption by Italian families.

The Vatican meeting is expected to advance Mother Teresa's candidacy for eventual beatification and sainthood.

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FINANCIAL TIMES
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Deal grants Russians unique Nato access while denying veto

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE text of the new Nato-Russia security deal guarantees Moscow a unique insight into alliance affairs but withholds from Moscow any right of veto.

The wording of the text, which was formally approved by Nato ambassadors in Brussels yesterday, makes it clear that, although Russia will be granted special consultation rights on security issues, the alliance will continue to

have total freedom to take whatever action it feels necessary, with or without Moscow's approval.

This was considered by Nato to be a vital part of the Nato-Russia agreement, and when Javier Solana, the alliance's Secretary-General, returned from Moscow on Wednesday after the successful negotiations with Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, he was given a standing ovation.

The clause in the text which underlines Nato's freedom to act belies the impression given by

President Yeltsin that Moscow would have a defining role in alliance decision-making.

The new agreement, which will be signed in Paris on May 27, will be called the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between Nato and the Russian Federation".

As part of the new consultation arrangements, Russia will appoint an ambassador to Nato and will send liaison officers to some of the alliance command headquarters. Nato will also have liaison officers

in Moscow and other central command centres, although not in regional headquarters, such as the vast nuclear submarine facility at Murmansk on the Kola peninsula.

Apart from a Russian Ambassador to Nato, Moscow will also send a civilian and military staff to Brussels. There will also be a secretariat to serve the new Nato-Russia Permanent Joint Council, the proposed forum for all consultations.

The Nato building will be so crowded that arrangements are

being made to rent adjoining premises to house the Russians, possibly connected by a private access road. By 1999, there will also be at least three new members of the alliance: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

After studying the agreed text of the new deal with Russia, senior Nato sources said: "There is nothing in it which will make us choke. It includes an unambiguous statement that, after consultation with Russia, Nato will still be free to act as it sees fit. This was the bottom

line for the alliance and the message in the agreement is quite clear."

However, they acknowledged that the deal would give the Russians a "unique and special status".

"We have also told the Russians that this agreement is just the beginning and that, as the relationship improves, their role could become even more significant," one source said.

On a visit to Bonn yesterday, Señor Solana underlined that the

new security accord with Russia would not prevent the alliance from developing military infrastructures in the new member countries. Nato has included in the text a declaration that it has no intention or plan to deploy nuclear weapons or substantial conventional forces on the territory of new member states.

Yesterday's approval by alliance ambassadors of the text of the Nato-Russia act was unanimous. It has yet to be formally approved by Russia.

Bonn attacked on gold 'witchcraft' to plug budget deficit

THEO WAIGEL, the German Finance Minister, yesterday ducked and weaved through an angry parliamentary debate criticising his planned use of German gold reserves to plug the country's yawning budget deficit.

"This is not a trick, it is current practice," he said to opposition jeers. There would be no gold sales, Herr Waigel declared, and the Government would "guarantee the standing of the central bank and our currency".

The minister, who confirmed that he would move quickly to sell off some of Bonn's stake in Deutsche Telekom, said that the emergency measures would help to offset the financial burden of German unification. However, Ingrid Matthaeus-Maier, of the Social Democrat opposition said: "The German Government is facing an unprecedented financial crisis. You are making a mockery of us all." Although Herr Waigel brushed off the criticism, there were clear signs that his ambitious scheme to keep Bonn on course for economic and monetary union could destroy German trust in the project.

An article in the mass circulation *Bild* newspaper described his proposal to raise the value of Bundesbank gold reserves as "witchcraft". Even Lamberto Dini, the Italian Foreign Minister, said the German plan could jeopardise monetary union.

As the German Government resorts to increasingly

Far from helping Germany to meet monetary union targets, many believe tampering with reserves will jeopardise the euro, Roger Boyes writes from Bonn

desperate measures to meet the Maastricht fiscal criteria, so the attractiveness of postponing monetary union increases for those outside the political class. Dr Wilhelm Nölling, a former member of the Bundesbank Council, will visit Britain and France next week to plead for a joint initiative to postpone the euro. "I regard the British Govern-

6 This is an unprecedented financial crisis. You are making a mockery of us all

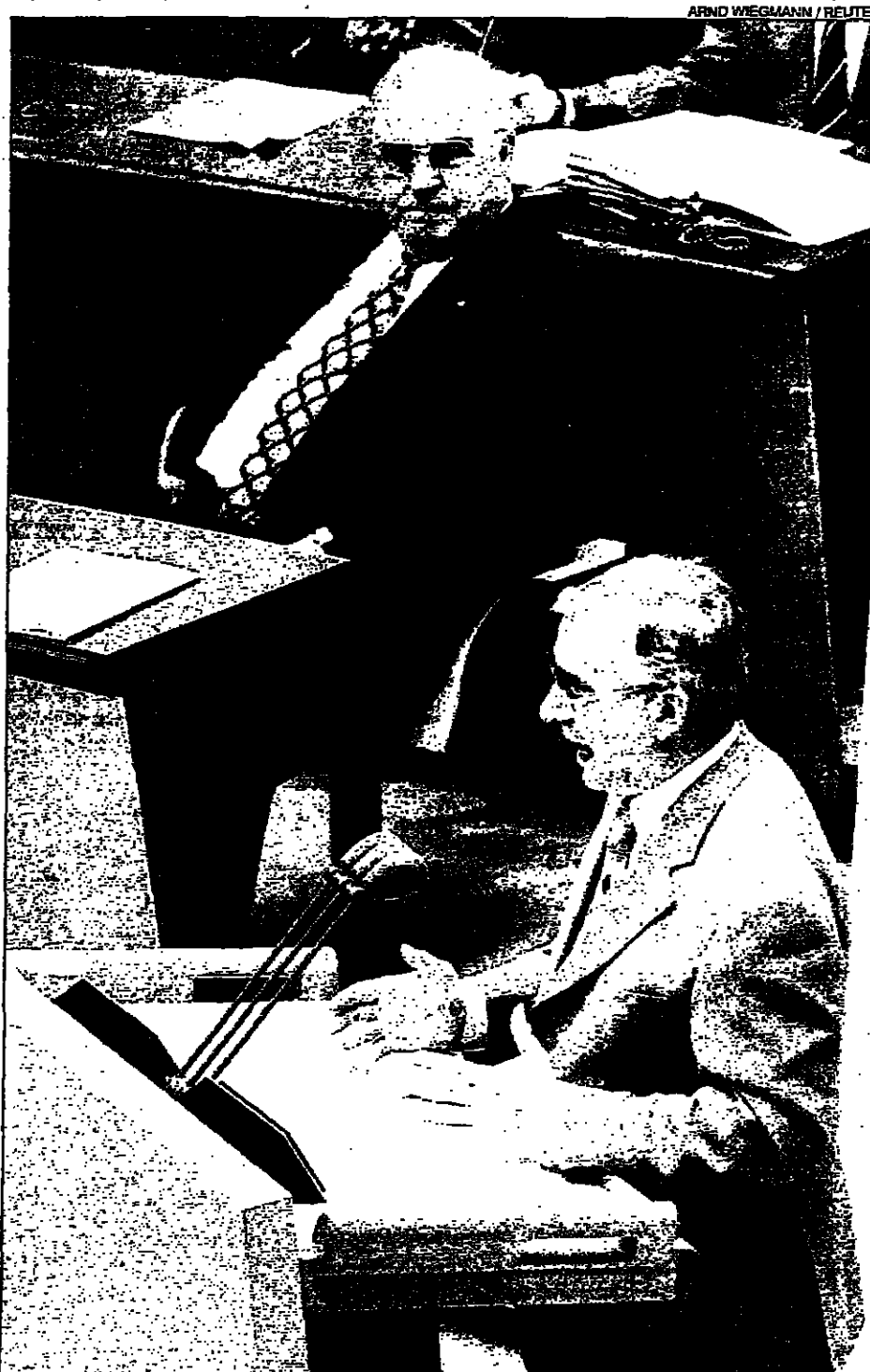
ment's decision to give its central bank independence, while leaving anti-inflation policy to the Government, as a good model for the future European Central Bank," he said in an interview with *The Times*. "Why not change the whole present framework for the European Central Bank? It is in any case far too early to start European monetary union." Dr Nölling was

one of many voices yesterday urging extreme caution in the use of gold reserves. For years the Bundesbank resisted pressure from Social Democrat politicians to increase the value of its gold.

It has been able to fend off these appeals partly because Bundesbank law says gold should be valued at its purchase price, and the bank bought it cheaply. "Now Waigel is up to his neck in water and the bank is regarded as a gold mine," Dr Nölling said.

Financial experts were yesterday trying to work out how Herr Waigel could make use of the 95 million ounces of gold reserves. Most analysts argued that the Bundesbank law would have to be changed by the summer. However, Bundesbank accounts run until December 31; a transfer of profits to the Government could be expected only by spring 1998, which would be too late for Germany to achieve the finely tuned arithmetic of monetary union. Another solution might be for the Bundesbank to sell some gold and immediately buy it back, which would allow it to make a transfer within the present financial year.

Leading article, page 23



Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor, watches Theo Waigel address parliament yesterday

Bartering begins to forge 'son of Maastricht' pact

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

THE countdown to a revamped Maastricht treaty began in earnest yesterday when negotiators sought to clear the ground for a final trade-off among European Union leaders in Amsterdam. After 14 months of hard grind, the imminent deadline and the arrival of a more Euro-friendly British Government have fuelled hopes that the mid-June summit will produce a deal which retunes the Maastricht machine and sets the scene for shifting the EU frontier eastwards into the former Soviet bloc.

Doug Henderson, Britain's new EU Minister, yesterday joined his 14 fellow negotiators near Maastricht in an attempt by the Dutch to narrow continuing differences over ways to equip the Union with greater powers over crime, frontiers and defence policy. In return for its exemption over borders, London will be expected to give ground in its resistance to endowing the EU with a defence mandate.

France and Germany are pressing for the EU to take over the Western European Union, the European wing of Nato, but the scheme is likely to be diluted in the face of opposition from Britain and the neutral states.

The hopeful mood at the intergovernmental conference (IGC) contrasts with the pessimism that reigned earlier this year amid talk of deferring the treaty to another summit in the autumn. The main potential spanner in the works for the Dutch EU presidency is the French general election, which ends only two weeks

before the summit. The emerging "son of Maastricht" falls far short of the political makeover desired by Germany and other federal-minded states. German officials are grumbling that the Blair administration is almost as resistant to change as its Tory predecessor. The Government is more sceptical than the Major team about the wisdom of setting up a system that would allow states to club together with new joint policies, leaving out unwilling members.

The new treaty will go some way to streamlining the way the EU does business and seeks to answer continental criticism that Maastricht detached the Union from its peoples. Among features aimed at "bringing Europe closer to the citizens" is an agreement on lifting internal frontiers, and pooling forces to administer visas and fight crime.

Britain has been promised an exemption from common border control and will be allowed to stay out of moves to centralise some police work. The Union's desire to respond to public anxiety is also on display in an "employment chapter" which will commit governments' jobs policies to joint scrutiny. Allegations of EU paralysis over foreign policy will be only partly answered by a system of "constructive abstention", which skirts the problem of a blocking veto. EU leaders stage a dress rehearsal for Amsterdam when they assemble for a one-day session on the Dutch North Sea coast next Friday.

10p

CRICKET

England announce their one-day squad to face the Australians.

THE TIMES

FILM

The Palme d'Or winner from Cannes is reviewed.

IN MONDAY'S

10P TIMES

ARTS

An interview with David Bowie, pop star turned publisher.

RUGBY

A free 16-page supplement on the Lions tour of South Africa.

<http://www.the-times.co.uk>

CHANGING TIMES

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Former rebel chief who fought Algerian independence takes up Le Pen's banner in South of France

Warrior for the Front line

MARSEILLES FILE
by BEN
MACINTYRE



THIRTY years ago, Jean-Jacques Susini was an exile from France, where two death sentences were hanging over him, the second for organising a plot to assassinate President de Gaulle. As one of the principal leaders of the Secret Army Organisation (OAS) — the group of rebel French soldiers and hardline Algerian *pieds noirs* who had launched a brutal terror campaign to resist Algerian independence — M. Susini was one of the most wanted men in France.

Today the Government in Paris has fresh reason to fear him, for M. Susini has emerged from obscurity to stand as a candidate for the extreme-right National Front in north Marseilles. In a constituency of raging unemployment, high immigration and a record of enthusiasm

for the xenophobic ultra-nationalist Front, he has a good chance of ousting the Communists, who have held the seat since 1936. In the *pied noir* community in Marseilles he is greeted by many as a returning hero, a symbol of a war none has forgotten.

A balding man of 63, M. Susini this week seemed a far cry from the shadowy propaganda chief for the rebel OAS, whose militants killed 2,000 people. At that time M. Susini was among the most capable defenders of "l'Algérie Fran-

caise", now he shows the same determination to protect what the Front calls "La France Française". The battlefield has changed, but the language is uncannily reminiscent of the earlier conflict. "I am here to defend the human historical landscape of France," the Corsican-born nationalist declares, citing immigration and *la mondialisation* , the fear that France is being swamped by foreign influences, as the twin scourges of modern society. On the subject of his former

life, M. Susini is guarded. "My past is my honour, let us talk about the future," he says. But for many accompanying the candidate through the backstreets of Marseilles, M. Susini's past is precisely the reason for his candidature. "This is a courageous man. He was always in the vanguard," said Thomas Sarsampa, 65, a veteran of the OAS's elite Delta Commando. "We were never terrorists. We were protecting people," he declared.

Condemned to death in absentia for his part in OAS military activities, M. Susini took refuge in Italy, where he planned the assassination of de Gaulle, considered a traitor by the OAS for "surrendering" Algeria. The abortive plot earned M. Susini another death sentence. He won a final amnesty in 1957.

The decision of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the Front leader, to parachute his friend into Marseilles was clever. In the last parliamentary election here, 45 per cent of second-round votes went to the Front. Vitrolles, the latest town captured by *lepénistes* , is a few minutes' drive away and, M. Le Pen believes, winning a seat in Marseilles would confirm the rolling momentum of the Front in the South.

Tapie hones passing skills in fraud case

FRENCH sports fans have been treated this week to a virtuoso display of passing the buck by former officials of the Marseille football team.

At issue is the question of who, precisely, was responsible for the disappearance of Fr100 million (£11 million) from the accounts of the club, which won the European Championship in 1993. Among those charged are Bernard Tapie, the disgraced former Socialist minister and tycoon-turned-film star, his former finance manager, his personal assistant, the ex-manager of his business empire and Michel Hidalgo, one-time French national football coach and sporting director at Marseilles.

In the first few, baffling days of testimony, every co-defendant in turn denied responsibility, blamed every other co-defendant or insisted they were obeying orders. As usual, the flamboyant Tapie was most eloquent. "I set the menu and the others did the cooking," he said, explaining why he was not responsible for what happened to the missing cash.

The charges against Tapie — of fraud, misuse of company funds and falsifying documents — carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison. Like the other members of his former management team, the fallen football boss has shown rare passing skills, but even if he avoids the latest tackle by the French legal system M. Tapie is likely to be off games for some time. He is now serving an eight-month sentence for match-rigging.



Jean-Jacques Susini: was once one of France's most wanted men

Sunk without a quick flotation

THE vast family of sailing boats that clusters along the Mediterranean shore has lost what must be considered their oldest ancestor when the *Pount* , a replica of the boats used by the Phoenicians, circa 600 BC, sank. The vessel was lovingly built by Andre Gil-Argentan to see if such a craft could make a voyage around the whole of Africa, as claimed by history or legend. This M. Gil-Argentan and the *Pount* did, between 1988 and 1991, after which she

went into dignified retirement at anchor in the navy arsenal at Toulon — until this month when she abruptly went down — due, he says, to a "gust of wind". M. Gil-Argentan is feverishly trying to raise FF60,000 (£6,400) to raise the *Pount* and send her to Bordeaux, where a museum has agreed to house the vessel. He is not hopeful about the funds, and predicts the voyage to the bottom of Toulon harbour will be the vessel's last.

Skopje given poll ultimatum

FROM TOM WALKER
IN SKOPJE

THE leading right-wing opposition party in Macedonia last night vowed to continue mass demonstrations in Skopje until the Government of Branko Crvenkovski, the Prime Minister, resigns and fresh polls are called before autumn. A protest in the capital's

Macedonia Square by 40,000 people who were affected by the collapse of a pyramid savings bank confirmed the growing popularity of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO) and established its head, Ljubco Georgievski, as a leading light in what promises to be a summer of discontent. He gave the Government

seven days to reply to his party's demands. "There is a large critical mass of people who are not satisfied with their economic situation," Mr Georgievski declared. "The VMRO has control of them for the moment, but one day there could be another Albania." By last night, there was still no response from the left-wing Government.

Harare street bypasses imperial past

Harare: Further remnants of empire are to be wiped off the Zimbabwean capital's map next week when the name of South Africa's President Mandela replaces that of the Victorian English explorer Sir Samuel Baker on the signs for a busy Harare street (Jan Raath writes).

Harare city council announced yesterday that signs for Baker Avenue, commemorating the discoverer of Uganda's Lake Albert and the Murchison Falls, would be removed in time for an unveiling ceremony honouring Mr Mandela on Monday soon after he arrives here for a three-day state visit. John Speke, discoverer of the Nile's source, is the last Briton remembered in a street name.

Italy steps up hunt for killer who stalks lonely widows

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

POLICE in southern Italy said yesterday that they were hunting a serial killer who preys on elderly women, mostly widows, living on their own. The killer — assumed to be a man — has struck seven times in the past year in Puglia in the heel of Italy, most recently on Wednesday when Pasqua Ludovico, 86, who lived on her own, was found in a pool of blood in her ground floor flat at Castellana, near Taranto. As in other serial killings, the murders follow a pattern: the victims have all been women in their seventies and eighties, and have all had their throats cut. The killer does not interfere with them sexually, and although the flats are ran-

sacked, with drawers and cupboards turned out, no valuables are taken. In all seven cases, police said, the bodies were laid out neatly on the floor and bore no signs of bruising or fractures. The killings have all taken place on a Wednesday or Thursday evening, at a time when there was a big football match on television. Italy is still haunted by memories of the "Monster of Florence", the serial killer who murdered courting couples in the woods around Florence between 1968 and 1985. In 1994 Pietro Pacciani, an elderly farm labourer, was convicted of the murders. Last year he was freed on appeal, but he is due to be retried in the autumn after new evidence from witnesses and alleged fellow members of a gang of murderous "Peeping Toms". Three of his alleged accomplices go on trial separately next week.

The first murder by the man the Italian press has dubbed the "Monster of Puglia" took place in Lucera, near Foggia, in April last year when an 85-year-old woman was killed. In five of the murders the killer has used a knife and in two cases a screwdriver. One theory is that the killer dresses as a figure of trust, perhaps a priest. In one murder, police found a cross and a photograph of the victim's grandson, carefully placed on her body.



Georgievski: deadline

OPERA & BALLET

COLISEUM 0171 832 8000 CIVIL ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA. Ton 6.30. Tue 7.30 LA TRAVIATA. ROYAL OPERA HOUSE 0171 304 4000 For Box Office & Standby info. Tickets, available on the day. The Royal Opera. Ton 8.00 First Night. KATYA KABANOVA.

DANCE

SADLER'S WELLS at the PACOCCA THEATRE 0171 314 8800 Compagnie Antonio Gades. GARDEN. "SO HOT IT SCOKES" 10.5. Until June 8. Eves 8. Sat 8.5 & 8.8.

THEATRES

ADELPHI. Legendary Entertainer. JERRY LEWIS. DAMN YANKIES. A hilarious musical... with heart! Red, pace, grace from '59 May. Opens 4 June. 0171 413 7777 (24hrs. box office) Gps 0800 614903. 0171 830 3000 (no fee).

ALBERT THEATRE 80 & 0171 386 1700 cc 344 4444 (big fee). Gps 413 3201, 312 5585 & 312 5586. ANN CRUMB IN. THE GOODYEAR GIRL. A New Musical. "TERRIFIC... one of the best nights out in London." C. K. Mag. Back by Neil Simon. Music by Marvin Hamlisch. Lyrics by Don Black. Eves Mon-Fri 8pm. Wed Sat 3pm. Sat 5 & 8.30pm.

ALDWYCH 0171 416 6007 (big fee). 0171 420 0000 (big fee). Eves 7.30pm. Wed & Sat 3pm. "THE BEST ORIGINAL PLAY IN TOWN" in Her Trib. MICHAEL McCOWEN. "TOWERING PERFORMANCES". Evening Standard. TOM & CLEM. A new play by STEPHEN CHURCHETT. Directed by RICHARD WILSON. "HIGHLY ENJOYABLE" D. Tel.

APOLLO 20th cc 0171 484 5070 cc 0171 344 4444 (big fee). Gps 0171 484 5454. BEN ELTON'S. "Fast, funny and downright sexy." Evening Standard. "A bloody good night out." F. T. Mon-Sat 8.00pm. Mates Wed 3.00pm Sat 4.00pm.

APOLLO VICTORIA cc 0171 416 6005 cc 24hrs 0171 344 4444 (big fee). 0171 420 0000 Gps 416 6070/1321. Andrew Lloyd Webber's. STARLIGHT EXPRESS. THE FASTEST SHOW ON EARTH. While London runs 19.45 daily. Tue & Sat 3pm. Tickets from £12.50. CAMBRIDGE 404 5500/416 6000. 344 4444/420 0000 (+ big fee). Gps 491 5454. 416 6070/13 321/1408 5588.

GREASE. Starting SHANE RICHIE. "A Monster Hit" D. Mirror. Mon-Sat 7.30pm. Wed & Sat 3pm. GREASE NOW BIGG INTO 1998. COMEDY 0171 369 1731. 344 4444/420 0000 (24hrs). Eves & Mates Wed 8.5 & 9. Sat 8. THE PETER HALL COMPANY. PETER BOWLES. ERIC SYGNS. "A Mole's hilarious comedy."

THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES. "POSITIVELY GLITTERING." THIS IS AS GOOD AS IT GETS. Daily Mail.

THEATRES

CRITERION 369 1737/344 4444. REDUCED SHAKESPEARE. COMPANY IN THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (abridged). At 37 Plays in 97 Minutes. "Hilarious" Times. Mates Thur & Sat 5 & 8.30pm. 420 0000 (big fee). THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF AMERICA (abridged). Tuesday at 8pm. London's Longest Running Comedy Hit.

DOMINION 0171 656 1866/0890. 2000/0890 2000/0890 0171 420 0000 (big fee). Gps 0171 416 6060/0171 312 1897/0830 514833. London's longest running show with DISNEY'S. BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. A NEW MUSICAL. "AN ENCHANTING EVENING... GENUINELY GLORIOUS" D. Tel. "A FEELING OF GOOD FUN" D. Mail. Mon-Sat 7.30. Wed & Sat Mates 2.30.

MISS SAIGON. "THE CLASSIC LOVE STORY OF OUR TIME" NOW IN ITS. 8TH EXTRAORDINARY YEAR. Eves 7.45 Mates Wed & Sat 3pm. Good seats available for Wed & Sat. 5000/344 4444/420 0000 Gps 484 5454/413 311/312 8000.

DRURY LANE THEATRE ROYAL. SS cc (big fee) 24th 7 days 0171 484 5000/344 4444/420 0000 Gps 484 5454/413 311/312 8000.

LYRIC THEATRE. HANNAH. "The most thrilling and chilling play for years" D. Mail. NOW IN ITS 10TH YEAR. Mon-Sat 7.30 Mates Wed & Sat 3.00 UNTIL 5 JULY.

PORTFOLIO 80 & 0171 626 2230/12 8933/494 5588. Ewan Hooper. JAMES SIMMONS. "The woman in black" a love story, a moral thriller and a courtroom drama. THRILLING... FEAR AND AWAY. THE BEST THING IN THE WEST. "END" 5 Times. Mon-Sat 7.30 Mates Wed & Sat 3.00 UNTIL 5 JULY.

GARRICK 0171 494 5085/512 1990. 494 5288 (no big fee). Groups 0171 494 5454. WINNER OF 19 MAJOR AWARDS. The Royal National Theatre. Production. SUZANNE BERTISH. PIP DONAGHY. BARRY STANTON. AN INSPECTOR CALLS. "THRILLING... MUST BE SEEN" D. Mail. "TWO HOURS OF ENTERTAINING, VISUALLY STUNNING DRAMA" D. Tel. Mon-Fri 7.45, Sat 5.00 & 8.15. Wed mat 2.30.

HER MAJESTY'S 24th 494 5400 (big fee). CC 344 4444/420 0000 (big fee). Gps 491 5454/413 321/1408 5588. AWARD WINNING MUSICAL. THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. Directed by HAROLD PRINCE. NOW BIGG TO DEC 30. Eves 7.45 Mates Wed & Sat 3.00. Apply to Box Office daily for returns.

THE OPERA. Directed by HAROLD PRINCE. NOW BIGG TO DEC 30. Eves 7.45 Mates Wed & Sat 3.00. Apply to Box Office daily for returns.

HAYMARKET 630 8820 (no big fee). 344 4444/420 0000 (big fee). Eves 8 Mates Thur & Sat 5. Royal Exchange Theatre Co. OSCAR WILDE. CLASSIC COMEDY. LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN. "WITNESS TO GLAMOUROUS" "DON'T MISS IT" Cps. LABATT'S APOLLO. 0171 416 6050/420 0000/344 4444 (big fee). 416 6070/436 5588 (big fee).

CLIFF RICHARD. HEATHCLIFF. "Spectacular, stunning" D. Mail. Mon-Sat 8pm. Final UK Performance Tonight. LONDON PALLADIUM BOCC. 0171 494 5000/344 4444 (big fee). (1st 1st seat chg) 420 0000. Gps 0171 494 5454/420 0000. BARRY HUMPHRIES. RETURNS AS FAGIN. OLIVER! 3RD IMPRESSIVE YEAR. "LUCIAL BART'S MASTERPIECE YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS" S. Times. Eves 7.30 Mates Wed & Sat 2.30. SOME GOOD SEATS AVAILABLE FOR WEEKEND PERFS. LYCEUM cc 0171 656 1806. 0890 800 800/344 4444/420 0000 (big fee). Gps 416 6076. THE ROCKS & ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S. JESUS CHRIST. SUPERSTAR. "Sends shivers racing down the spine" D. Telegraph. Eves 7.45, Mates Wed & Sat 3. Pro big fee for personal callers at the Lyceum box office (Mon-Sat) 615 include for outside seat Mon-Thurs. Now booking to September. Some seats still at cost Mon-Thurs.

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OLD VIC 0171 528 7616. 24hrs 420 0000 (no big fee). The Peter Hall Company. 7 days. WASTE. by Harley Granville Barker. Wed & Thur at 7.30pm. May 24 mat 2.30pm. May 28 & 31 at 7.30pm. Sun June 1 mat 3pm, June 5 & 7 mat 2.30pm, June 6 at 7.30pm. "Superb, gripping production gets the first season off to a blazing start" S. Times. CLOUD NINE. by Caryl Churchill. Last 5 performances at 7.30pm. May 20, 24, 27 & June 4 at 7.30pm. "Disgracefully funny" D. Mail. THE SEAGULL. by Anton Chekhov. English version by Tom Stoppard. Today & Thur mat 2.30pm, Fri at 7.30pm. Sun May 25 mat 3pm, May 30 at 7.30pm. May 28 & 31 mat 2.30pm, June 3, 5 & 7 at 7.30pm. PRAYERS OF SHERIDAN. by Sebastian Barry. Today at 8pm. Mon at 7.30pm. Sun May 25 at 8pm, May 28 at 7.30pm. Sun June 1 at 8pm, May 29 at 7.30pm. Tickets 10 - 19. Don't Miss Sam's At The Old Vic.

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Deal grants Russians unique Nato access while denying veto

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE text of the new Nato-Russia security deal guarantees Moscow a unique insight into alliance affairs but withholds from Moscow any right of veto.

The wording of the text, which was formally approved by Nato ambassadors in Brussels yesterday, makes it clear that, although Russia will be granted special consultation rights on security issues, the alliance will continue to

have total freedom to take whatever action it feels necessary, with or without Moscow's approval.

This was considered by Nato to be a vital part of the Nato-Russia agreement, and when Javier Solana, the alliance's Secretary-General, returned from Moscow on Wednesday after the successful negotiations with Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, he was given a standing ovation.

The clause in the text which underlines Nato's freedom to act

President Yeltsin that Moscow would have a defining role in alliance decision-making.

The new agreement, which will be signed in Paris on May 27, will be called the "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between Nato and the Russian Federation".

As part of the new consultation arrangements, Russia will appoint an ambassador to Nato and will send liaison officers to some of the alliance command headquarters. Nato will also have liaison officers

in Moscow and other central command centres, although not in regional headquarters, such as the vast nuclear submarine facility at Murmansk on the Kola peninsula.

Apart from a Russian Ambassador to Nato, Moscow will also send a civilian and military staff to Brussels. There will also be a secretariat to serve the new Nato-Russia Permanent Joint Council, the proposed forum for all consultations.

The Nato building will be so crowded that arrangements are

being made to rent adjoining premises to house the Russians, possibly connected by a private access road. By 1999, there will also be at least three new members of the alliance: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

After studying the agreed text of the new deal with Russia, senior Nato sources said: "There is nothing in it which will make us choke. It includes an unambiguous statement that, after consultation with Russia, Nato will still be free to act as it sees fit. This was the bottom

line for the alliance and the message in the agreement is quite clear."

However, they acknowledged that the deal would give the Russians a "unique and special status".

"We have also told the Russians that this agreement is just the beginning and that, as the relationship improves, their role could become even more significant," one source said.

On a visit to Bonn yesterday, Señor Solana underlined that the

new security accord with Russia would not prevent the alliance from developing military infrastructures in the new member countries. Nato has included in the text a declaration that it has no intention or plan to deploy nuclear weapons or substantial conventional forces on the territory of new member states.

Yesterday's approval by alliance ambassadors of the text of the Nato-Russia act was unanimous. It has yet to be formally approved by Russia.

Bonn attacked on gold 'witchcraft' to plug budget deficit

THEO WAIGEL, the German Finance Minister, yesterday ducked and weaved through an angry parliamentary debate criticising his planned use of German gold reserves to plug the country's yawning budget deficit.

"This is not a trick, it is current practice," he said to opposition jeers. There would be no gold sales, Herr Waigel declared, and the Government would "guarantee the standing of the central bank and our currency".

The minister, who confirmed that he would move quickly to sell off some of Bonn's stake in Deutsche Telekom, said that the emergency measures would help to offset the financial burden of German unification. However, Ingrid Matthäus-Maier, of the Social Democrat opposition, said: "The German Government is facing an unprecedented financial crisis. You are making a mockery of us all." Although Herr Waigel brushed off the criticism, there were clear signs that his ambitious scheme, to keep Bonn on course for economic and monetary union, could destroy German trust in the project.

An article in the mass circulation *Bild* newspaper described his proposal to raise the value of Bundesbank gold reserves as "witchcraft". Even Lamberto Dini, the Italian Foreign Minister, said the German plan could jeopardise monetary union.

As the German Government resorts to increasingly

Far from helping Germany to meet monetary union targets, many believe tampering with reserves will jeopardise the euro, Roger Boyes writes from Bonn

desperate measures to meet the Maastricht fiscal criteria, so the attractiveness of postponing monetary union increases for those outside the political class. Dr Wilhelm Nölling, a former member of the Bundesbank Council, will visit Britain and France next week to plead for a joint initiative to postpone the euro. "I regard the British Govern-

"This is an unprecedented financial crisis. You are making a mockery of us all"

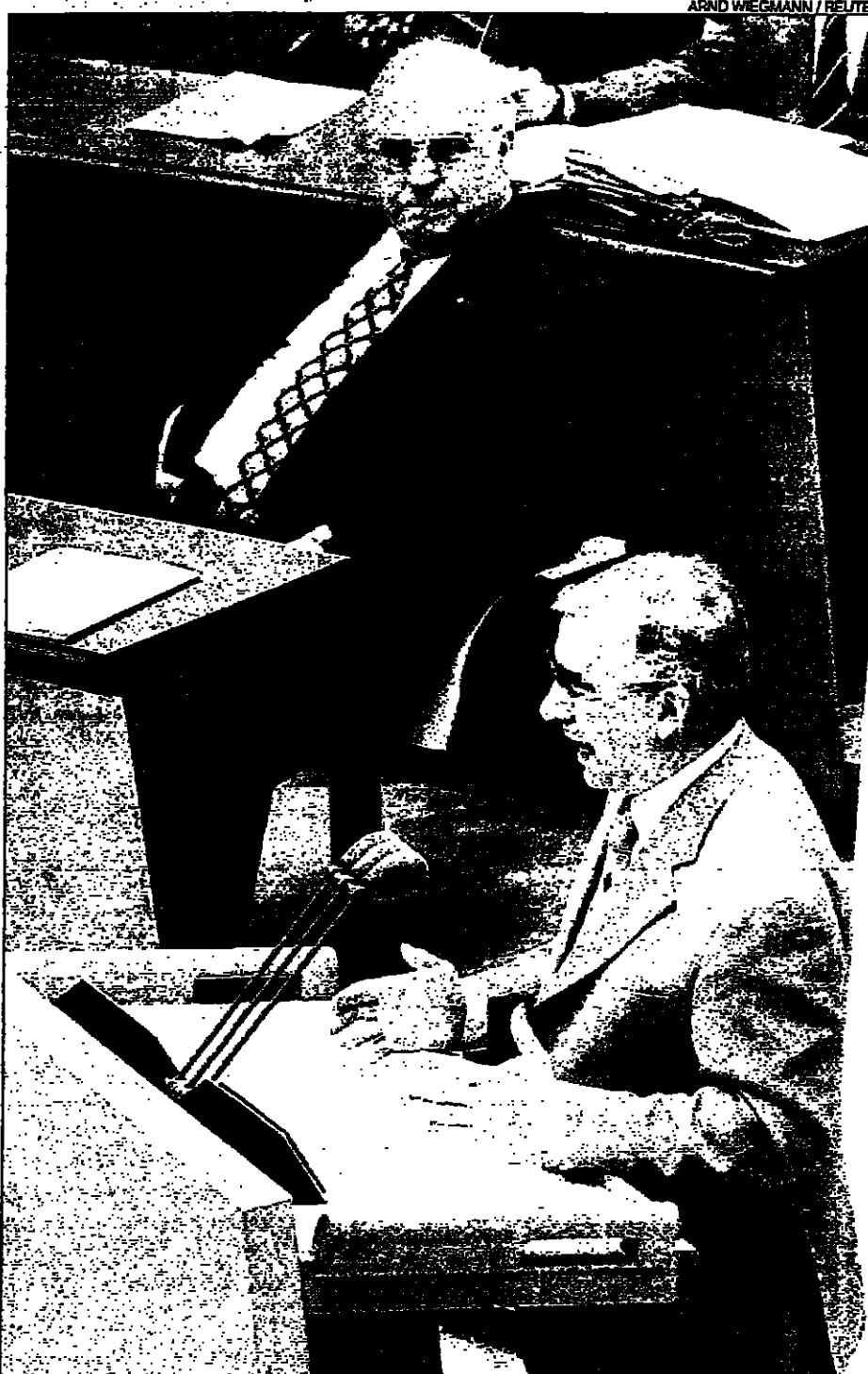
ment's decision to give its central bank independence, while leaving anti-inflation policy to the Government, as a good model for the future European Central Bank," he said in an interview with *The Times*. "Why not change the whole present framework for the European Central Bank? In any case far too many start European monetary union." Dr Nölling was

one of many voices yesterday urging extreme caution in the use of gold reserves. For years the Bundesbank resisted pressure from Social Democrat politicians to increase the value of its gold.

It has been able to fend off these appeals partly because Bundesbank law says gold should be valued at its purchase price, and the bank bought cheaply. "Now Waigel is up to his neck in water and the bank is regarded as a gold mine," Dr Nölling said.

Financial experts were yesterday trying to work out how Herr Waigel could make use of the 95 million ounces of gold reserves. Most analysts argued that the Bundesbank law would have to be changed by the summer. However, Bundesbank accounts run until December 31; a transfer of profits to the Government could be expected only by spring 1998, which would be too late for Germany to achieve the finely tuned arithmetic of monetary union. Another solution might be for the Bundesbank to sell some gold and immediately buy it back, which would allow it to make a transfer within the present financial year.

Leading article, page 23



Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor, watches Theo Waigel address parliament yesterday

Bartering begins to forge 'son of Maastricht' pact

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

THE countdown to a revamped Maastricht treaty began in earnest yesterday when negotiators sought to clear the ground for a final trade-off among European Union leaders in Amsterdam.

After 14 months of hard grind, the imminent deadline and the arrival of a more Euro-friendly British Government have fuelled hopes that the mid-June summit will produce a deal which returns the Maastricht machine and sets the scene for shifting the EU frontier eastwards into the former Soviet bloc.

Doug Henderson, Britain's new EU Minister, yesterday joined his 14 fellow negotiators near Maastricht in an attempt by the Dutch to narrow continuing differences over ways to equip the Union with greater powers over crime, frontiers and defence policy. In return for its exemption over borders, London will be expected to give ground in its resistance to endowing the EU with a defence mandate.

France and Germany are pressing for the EU to take over the Western European Union, the European wing of Nato, but the scheme is likely to be diluted in the face of opposition from Britain and the neutral states.

The hopeful mood at the intergovernmental conference (IGC) contrasts with the pessimism that reigned earlier this year amid talk of deferring the treaty to another summit in the autumn. The main potential spanner in the works for the Dutch EU presidency is the French general election, which ends only two weeks

before the summit. The emerging "son of Maastricht" falls far short of the political makeover desired by Germany and other federal-minded states. German officials are grumbling that the Blair administration is almost as resistant to change as its Tory predecessor. The Government is more sceptical than the Major team about the wisdom of setting up a system that would allow states to club together with new joint policies, leaving out unwilling members.

The new treaty will go some way to streamlining the way the EU does business and seeks to answer continental criticism that Maastricht detached the Union from its peoples. Among features aimed at "bringing Europe closer to the citizens" is an agreement on lifting internal frontiers, and pooling forces to administer visas and fight crime.

Britain has been promised an exemption from common border control and will be allowed to stay out of moves to centralise some police work. The Union's desire to respond to public anxiety is also on display in an "employment chapter" which will commit governments' jobs policies to joint scrutiny. Allegations of EU paralysis over foreign policy will be only partly answered by a system of "constructive abstention", which skirts the problem of a blocking veto. EU leaders stage a dress rehearsal for Amsterdam when they assemble for a one-day session on the Dutch North Sea coast next Friday.

10p

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The reformer all Russians love to hate

The historian Orlando Figes reflects on Gorbachev's remarkable unpopularity

A few weeks ago the regulars of a Surrey pub were bemused by the spectacle of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev drinking a pint of bitter at their bar. Though he gently signed the menu, the former Soviet leader still stands on his dignity. Accompanied by four bodyguards, he likes to be addressed by his defunct presidential title, and gives the impression of a man convinced of his destiny.

Yet the collapse of Gorbachev's personal prestige among his countrymen has been as emphatic as the ruin of the empire over which he presided between 1985 and 1991. Today in Russia hardly anyone has a kind word for him: communists, nationalists and democrats are united only by their contempt. In last year's presidential elections he polled less than 1 per cent.

So why is Gorbachev so unpopular in the country which he helped to liberate? He appears unable to explain it, judging from his *Memories*. When asked this question by Clive Anderson during his visit here last year, he turned it around: "Why am I so popular in the West?" Perhaps the adulation which Gorbachev continues to receive abroad has made it harder for him to comprehend his low esteem in Russia. He seems to believe that the people will recall him from the wilderness, like a Churchill or de Gaulle. On the face of it, that should not be impossible. There are

**Russians
have always
mistrusted
bureaucrats
and secret
rulers**

plenty of potential votes among the malcontents of Yeltsin's Russia: blue-collar workers, the unemployed, the impoverished pensioners and intelligentsia. A marriage of convenience with Aleksandr Lebed or Grigori Yavlinsky — both of whom were promoted by Gorbachev — could in theory propel the fallen leader back to the centre stage of Russian politics. Yet as every Russian knows, that will never come to pass. Gorbachev is politically dead and it would be suicide for any of the major players in Yeltsin's succession to associate his name with theirs.

There is a deeper explanation for the strength of feeling against Gorbachev than the one which is usually advanced: that he has become a scapegoat for the crisis in Russia today. The deeper explanation is, I think, to be found in Russian culture and history.

To be sure, Gorbachev is blamed for the chaos which has ensued from the collapse of communism. Although the fall in average living standards, rampant crime and the corruption are much more the result of Yeltsin's policies, they are seen to stem from Gorbachev's reforms.

In a deeply polarised society, moreover, there is little sympathy for Gorbachev's "middle way". Communists and Russian nationalists cannot forgive him for destroying the Soviet Union, and many denounce him as an agent of the West. But democrats and non-Russian nationalists believe his reforms aimed to strengthen communism and deceive the West (which they saw as their ally) into an acceptance of the Soviet regime.

There is a parallel in Russian history here. Gorbachev's real strength as a reformer was manifested inside the party, in his ability to manage its diversions and reset its agenda surreptitiously to avoid the sort of head-on clash with the hardliners which had brought down Khrushchev. Gorbachev's talents, in other words, were not geared towards the new world of mass democratic politics.

He may be compared in this respect to Petr Stolypin, the Prime Minister of Russia between 1906 and 1911. Both men were bravely committed to the reform of an old and decaying autocratic system of

which they were products, yet both failed because they approached it with too many blinkers from that monolithic, bureaucratic world.

Like Stolypin, Gorbachev did nothing to compete with the democratic forces largely created by his reforms. By failing to seek a democratic mandate for his presidency, he emphasised the fact that he had been selected to that post by the discredited *nomenklatura*, the party bureaucracy. When he was elected President of Russia his authority was further undermined.

Even more decisively, Gorbachev failed to realise the importance of founding a new party, or of splitting off the social democratic wing of the Communist Party, as a base of mass support for his reforms. Like Stolypin, he tried to impose his reforms from above and never really moved outside the old bureaucracy to mobilise support.

Once that system collapsed he was left without a legacy. Gorbachev's refusal to step out from the shadows of the Communist apparatus is another reason for the Russian people's deep mistrust of him. Russians often complain that they never really knew where Gorbachev stood. Did he want to end the communist system or reform it? What was his role in the bloody suppression of the Baltic and Georgian nationalists? And what was he really thinking during the putsch of August 1991? Many

people feel they have not had proper answers. The Russian people have a long tradition of mistrusting secret rulers. Peasants blamed the cruel actions of the Tsar on the "evil boyars", the noble bureaucrats, or "dark forces" such as Rasputin, who supposedly surrounded him.

Yeltsin in this sense has more in common with popular traditions of political culture. People know his faults but feel that he is at least a devil they know. Yeltsin's faults — his heavy drinking and exuberance, his crude peasant manners and mode of speech — they may even recognise as their own.

Gorbachev, by contrast, comes across as a clever bureaucrat — and so as duplicitous. Against all the evidence, Russians still believe that he must have been involved in the August putsch, that he sympathised with the hardline plotters and waited to see if they succeeded before deciding what to do.

Here too there is a parallel in history. The Kornilov putsch of August 1917 was like that of 1991, an attempt to compel the premier, Aleksandr Kerensky, to support a state of emergency and suppress democracy. Although Kerensky, like Gorbachev, undermined the coup by refusing to become its figurehead, he himself was widely blamed for it, not least because he had promoted Kornilov to command the army. His credibility collapsed. When the Bolshevik revolution came two months later, no one wanted to defend Kerensky.

On a visit to London in 1970, shortly before his death aged 89, Kerensky signed himself in a hotel register as "Prime Minister of Russia". To the end, Kerensky believed in his own destiny as the last legitimate leader of the short-lived Russian Republic. It seems as if Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, may share Kerensky's melancholy fate.

The author is a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. His book *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution (Cape)* has just won the *NCR Book Award*, the *Wolfson History Prize*, the *W.H. Smith Literary Award* and the *Longman/History Today Award*.

Scots would be proud to fund a new parliament building in Edinburgh, says Magnus Linklater

Scotland deserves a bonnier House

It was, in its way, a small moment of history — the unveiling to the Scottish people by a Scottish Secretary of the questions to be posed in a referendum which would establish the legitimacy of a Scottish Parliament. "I agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament." Or alternatively, "I do not agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament." Simple really. One wondered why it had taken 390 years to dream them up. True, Mr Secretary Dewar sounded more like a family solicitor announcing an unexpected bequest than the herald of a new era, but there we were — the process had begun.

Back in Edinburgh I strolled past the building where, Donald Dewar had assured us, the parliament would sit "before the millennium". The Royal High School certainly looks the part. Built about 170 years ago by Thomas Hamilton in the Athenian style, it is a copy of the Temple of Theseus, all pediments and pillars, standing four square on a curve of the Calton Hill, looking out over Holyrood and the Canongate. Good views, however, do not a parliament make. The more I thought about it, the more I realised that this building just would not do. Sooner or later it would have to be replaced. For a start, Theseus could hardly be a less suitable role model — he was, after all, a unionist rather than a devolver, the architect of the political reform that welded the commu-

nities of Attica into one state. More important, the place is too small, too cramped, too confrontational for the new model parliament that is being planned. Its debating chamber is a cockpit of a place, its narrow floor surrounded by raked seats which rear above it. It seems designed as a forum for altercation and hostility rather than civilised discussion. It is less open than even the House of Commons — yet it is precisely the yah-boo atmosphere of the Commons that everyone is attempting to avoid. The galleries that surround it provide inadequate room for the press and the public. There would be limited office space for members and although there is, surprisingly, a tunnel linking it to the old Scottish Office building across the road, the idea of members having to scurry along this in answer to the division bells is absurd.

The fact is that the High School was purpose-built for the 19th century rather than the 21st. However imaginatively adapted, it would still end up as a spatchcock affair. We must think up something better. Edinburgh has a great tradition of fine public buildings erected by philanthropists down the ages to house its schoolchildren, its lawyers, its doctors and, yes, its parliamentarians. At the same time, Scotland has a long and distinguished history of architectural achievement — from the Adam brothers through Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Alexander "Greek" Thomson to Robert Lorimer and Basil Spence. The time has come to revive that tradition and draw on that history.

The best idea would be an international architectural competition to design a parliament for the new millennium. It should encourage the most visionary of buildings, one that would do for Edinburgh what the opera house did for Sydney, or the Beaubourg for Paris. It could, if the citizens of Edinburgh were able to overcome their notorious conservatism, be built on the north side of the Calton Hill, where plans for a

new hotel have stuttered along ever since I can remember. Alternatively it could be constructed in Leith, where the old docks have given way to a new town and where, recently, the brand new Scottish Office opened for business.

I hope such a competition could be won by a Scottish architect, but I am not chauvinistic about it. The Scandinavian architects who have set new standards for creative design would instinctively recognise the Scottish challenge. I would be delighted for a Dutch or German architect to win — in both countries the symbolic importance of grand new public buildings has been recognised. I have nothing against Messrs Richard Rogers and Norman Foster, who seem to be ubiquitous on these occasions, but I would hope that something different came along. The last major competition in Scotland — for the new National Museum in Edinburgh — produced 370 entries from all over the world, and was won by a Scot. So anything is possible.

To all of which the deadening response is likely to be: *aye*, but who pays? One answer is that the money could simply come out of the block grant from Westminster. On Thursday Mr Dewar revealed that the £5 million which the referendum will cost would come out of that grant, adding that this was hardly excessive given a Scottish Office budget of £16 billion. So £100 million more or so would be little more than a dent. But that would spoil the whole point of the exercise. The proper solution is for the money to be raised in Scotland by Scots. What could be more symbolic of the enterprise and self-sufficiency which this new parliament is meant to embody than a great new building paid for by the country it represents?

In the old days, great monuments were erected by public subscription. The modern equivalent is the lottery. A combination of lottery funds contributed in Scotland, a Scottish Office allocation and, finally, a fixed share of that famous tartan tax would give every Scot a sense that they had made a personal contribution. It would be a parliament for the people, paid for by the people. And the result would be something in which all of them could take legitimate pride. I cannot think of a better atmosphere in which to launch a great endeavour.

Magnus Linklater is chairman of the Scottish Arts Council.

A Wapping for the Garden

Like old Fleet Street, the Royal Opera House is ripe for a revolution. But will its patrons cross picket lines?



Every word written this week about Covent Garden opera was nonsense. There are two reasons why the public will subsidise grand opera. One is to afford an exquisite experience to those who love opera and can get a ticket. Lucky them. The other is to give taxpayers some compensating thrill. At present that thrill is a feast of glamour, malice, anger, envy, anguish and extravagance, laid out for their delectation at regular intervals.

Covent Garden has recently passed both tests with flying colours. Its operatic output is as good as ever. The recent *Mastersingers* was top-flight. Reviews of *Elektra* last week indicated a triumph. If anarchy has indeed a role in art, the more of it the better. As for indulging the public's *Schadenfreude*, the week has been incomparable. Covent Garden's "second chorus" of critics and quote-makers have surpassed themselves.

I have lost count of the malaises, demoralisations, panic-stricken, misery crescendos and "all-time-lows" of the opera press. The new Royal Opera chairman, Lord Chadlington, is variously a Machiavellian Gradgrind and "a Wodehousean silly ass" (*The Times*). His board are "a bunch of amateurs" (*The Independent*) and the management "a juggling of fruit and veg" (*The Daily Telegraph*). To *The Guardian*, Covent Garden was nothing less than "a story about British society, with singing".

All this is because a new chief executive at the Opera House, Genista McIntosh, has not worked out after four months in the job. These things happen. In other businesses, executives come and go without such fuss. But there is a resignation with added Pavarotti — indeed with added Bernard Haitink and Darcy Bussell, not to mention an earl, a baron, a rich heiress, Otello, daggers, coups, masked balls and the *Mastersingers* of Nuremberg.

So there is no point in pretending. Part at least of the pleasure that the wider public derives from an institution such as Covent Garden is in opera as soap. Like the Royal Family and the Conservative Party, the story is dull when things go well but glorious when they are going wrong. Last year's documentary *The House* was an enthralling tale of artistic folk living through hell. The opera house is a stick of national furniture which we love to kick. Opera may be Carlyle's "speech of angels", but its reporting is a dirge of the damned.

Is it the critics wrong? I have read the answer a dozen times this

week. They want a Royal Opera House that is managed by true opera-lovers and not "money men". They want a state-of-the-art house full of gizmos. They want job security for a unionised workforce that is shockingly demoralised and exploited. They want "affordable" ticket prices and a subsidy that is "enough" yet not politically embarrassing. They want the world's best singers and conductors doing modern not "canary" operas. They want the best. They want to be free of the dead hand of sponsorship.

Why, ask the critics, don't the idiots who sit on the Covent Garden and Arts Council boards just do it? Stop fruiting around with grocers, bureaucrats and consultants and "give the artists the resources they need". The great and good in the royal box should stop meddling in art. They should hand over the money, all of it, or stand condemned as philistines.

The great and good have been doing this for decades. Sheer exhaustion has set in. When, some eight years ago, Lord Sainsbury and Vivien Duffield offered to match public money for a new Covent Garden building, push came to shove. Delay followed on delay. Costs continued to rise and

met an ever-stickier Treasury response. Something had to give. The prospect of temporary closure inevitably led to some thinking the unthinkable.

My own industry has been through this pain. I was not party to the Wapping adventure, but there was the same wide agreement that management must seize the right to manage and unions must

silently for the battle to succeed, yet they prayed loudly for Rupert Murdoch to come a cropper. Covent Garden has surely reached the gates of Wapping. Kate Mosse's 1995 book on *The House* listed 100 Musicians' Union members, 150 Equity members, 300 Bectu members, three-day weeks, 90 per cent of productions on overtime and staff with second jobs as taxi drivers, fish-and-chip shop owners, even pilots. The film showed a timekeeper clocking 15 hours of overtime to someone who never showed up, joking "they're all comedians here". The Covent Garden chorus is so overstuffed, it seems constantly in danger of falling into the orchestra pit. The pressure on the managers was and clearly still is appalling. Today the unions are again threatening a strike over touring.

An opera house is a temple of the muses, but it is also a factory. There is no easy way to reform a factory that has grown helplessly self-indulgent. It has to shut down and start again, or at least regard a shutdown threat as plausible. The opera house is shutting down. The opportunity is there.

Covent Garden is a nationalised industry in receipt of deficit finance

for 12, at which the Sidwell parents, specialists in the "psychoanalysis of film", will dissect the film's real meaning.

Latin link

DESPITE Michael Portillo's enforced absence from the Tory leadership campaign, the Latin element remains strong thanks to Daniel Hannan, maniacal Eurosceptic. *The Daily Telegraph's* leader writer, and Peruvian landowner, Hannan, 25, mutton-chopped and bald for his years, is described as a strategist for the Howard campaign.

When not out politicking in London, he returns to the land to ride among his thronging tenant farmers on horseback, dreaming of Chilean pension schemes and tortures for Sir Edward Heath. His job, say friends, is "to keep Howard firmly on the Right, treading the sendero luminoso to power".

In an interview for tomorrow's *Desert Island Discs* on Radio 4, the comedian Harry Enfield talks of a childhood trauma. When young,

Now the taxpayers have a chance to find out what they get when producers cannot spend at will. They cannot equate high spending with high art and allow unions to walk off with the cash. Taxpayers are entitled to know what "real-cost" opera would be like, even if they then decide that they prefer it done the old way. They might also have a view on whether a better way of expanding the audiences for opera is not to lop £10 off an exorbitant seat price but to broadcast each production to the world, and put it on video. Ms McIntosh's desire to have more "cheap" £50 seats as a liberal gesture is a measure of the fantasy in which opera management now exists.

The Chadlington-Allen duo promises to be what grand opera deserves — needs — but will never admit it needs. When the surgery is over, opera will not applaud, but silently approve. That is the British way with tough managers. There is no point in the Royal Opera House demanding even more money with artistic menaces. The outcome after reopening may be blood in Bow Street. For a while it may be a scratch orchestra in the pit and blacklegs on stage. The soft-hearted will retreat to the crush bar in silence. The test will lie with the audience. Do they love opera enough to hear it through a pickets' chorus?

Legs over

WOMEN'S leggings have been banned from the Royal Windsor Horse Show this year for the first time. The ruling is part of the first written dress code imposed for the members' enclosure at the show,



Jodhpurs but no leggings

which has recently been revamped. Men must wear jackets and ties. Tweed jackets or dark suits are recommended. No polo necks or polo shirts will be accepted. For women, skirts and smart trousers are allowed but leggings are forbidden.

In previous years, visitors to the enclosure, which the Queen visited yesterday, have always been expected to dress properly without being told, but increasing abuse of this adult approach has led to the need for a written code.

"We have inflicted a rigid dress code on our members," said an organiser for the show, "because we honestly think they should dress to a higher standard. In fact, yesterday we had to turn a couple away who were wearing jeans. Why shout they walk around looking like that when others have dressed up for the occasion?"

Leggings are a tricky one. Though comfortable, my style editor tells me that they can be a risky option for the less-than-perfect

figure. They are certainly not chic unless they are Chanel.

MPs in a pod

THERE is increasing concern at Millbank Towers, home to the flickering green screens of the Labour Party war machine, that they know too little about many of their



"If they can have one, we can too"

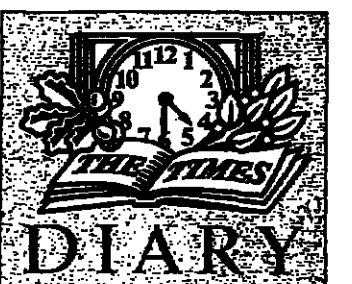
new MPs. Those who were expected to win were investigated thoroughly at the time of their selection. Less rigorous checks were run on those left to have a Twigg's chance in Enfield of unseating the local Tory, Michael Portillo.

"Lots of them are turning out to have worryingly left-wing pasts," says my main inside the Labour security cordon. "A new unit has been set up by Mandelson to investigate. We call it the Intelligence Pod."

Kiss me quick

EVEN before the Miss Universe pageant took place yesterday evening in Miami, the long, painted nails were out for Miss Estonia, the favourite to win the crown. Kristina Heinmetts may be 18, blue-eyed and blonde, but her manner is said to have the same effect as ice cream on an abcess.

She has been constantly hugging and kissing everyone she meets, playing up her cutesiness to the point where one of her minders complained: "If she kisses me one more time, I'm going to hit her." For keen followers of these matters, only Misses Colombia, Venezuela



and Italy were felt to pose a challenge to Miss E's stroll to the tide.

Not a lot

PARENTS of children at Sidwell Friends, Chelsea Clinton's school in Washington DC, have been asked to donate items for an auction. Last year the highest bidder won the chance to play a round of golf with the President. This year, Mr Clinton has only given a signed copy of his book, *Between Hope and History*.

One lot, however, is not expected to set the chequebooks fluttering: a private screening of the film *Witness*, followed by an Amish dinner



Harry Enfield with his father

he always understood that his parents had been great friends of Virginia Woolf. Then one day, he came across a copy of Woolf's diaries, turned to the index and found an entry for his parents. The nasty old lush had written: "I'd rather be dead in a field than go to tea with the Enfields."

P.H.S



OPINION
Does the EU really want to stop us enjoying the work of W.B. Yeats and other great names of the 20th century?



THEATRE
Characterisation does not go a lot deeper than the skin on display in the West End revival of *Steaming*

THE TIMES ARTS



COMEDY
Jack Dee shows off his new improved self at the Gielgud, but happily a few rough edges remain



ON MONDAY
Read Geoff Brown's final report from the Cannes Film Festival: the big winners revealed

Occasionally, like a beachcomber uncovering a semi-precious stone in unpromising shingle, those of us who trawl the scholastic journals for excitement come up with a real gem concealed under a title that is as enticing as a stale bun. This week was such a moment. I have been riveted, enthralled, consumed to the exclusion of all other matters, by the marvellous *Textual Monopolies: Literary Copyright and the Public Domain*. Readers, put down that Jilly Cooper bookbinder! If you want to glimpse human nature, red in tooth, claw and legal fees, then *Textual Monopolies: Literary Copyright and the Public Domain* is required reading.

Out this month, it's a collection of papers (edited by Patrick Parrinder and Warren Chernaik; published by King's College London) which examines one of the strangest pieces of European Union cultural meddling in recent years. In July 1995, the EU ruled that copyright should be harmonised throughout its dominions. And, if the word "harmonised" suggests a process of sweetness and concord, think again. This was a murky episode, with consequences that have affected anybody interested in books, films, plays, music and the visual arts.

As Parrinder points out, the legislation was "shaped by commercial horse-trading and political compromise, and dressed up with a rationale that is almost entirely bogus". It was rushed through Parliament without debate in a single day, and passed into law with virtually no public discussion. In a sense, then, these corruscating essays are two years too late. Never mind; at least we can moan retrospectively.

What happened in 1995? Well, Britain, like most other parts of the world, had a copyright law extending the rights of authors and their heirs for 50 years after the author's death. Germany, however — on the disingenuous pretext that its authors lost valuable royalties during the war — allowed 70 years of posthumous copyright. So when it came to harmonisation, guess who prevailed? Quite so. The EU decided that the Germans were right, and that Britain, 12 other EU countries, America, Australia and Canada were wrong.

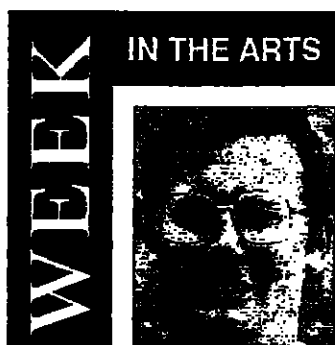
The consequences have been enormous. Authors, artists and composers who were in the public domain were suddenly back in copyright. Among them were Kipling, Elgar, Hardy, Holst, Barrie, Lorca, Delius, Lawrence, Monet, Conan Doyle and Yeats. This was good news for a whole witches' brew of vested interests, who had lobbied for years to bring it about: publishers, grasping heirs, bossy

the astonishing success of the maverick Wordsworth Classics in the early 1990s, with their cheap and cheerful reprints of out-of-copyright novels.

So why did the EU do it? It seems that the Eurocrats were dazzled by a single argument; that copyright is "fundamental to intellectual creation", and therefore should be massively protected for the good of us all. Well, nobody wants to rob creative talents of their living, and I suppose you could just about extend that principle to their kiddies. But 70 years of posthumous protection takes us well beyond that. It is a licence for suppression of our cultural heritage.

What's more, the concept of "fair dealing" (by which scholars and critics can quote a limited amount of text without infringing copyright) has been eroded to such an extent that some powerful copyright holders barely acknowledge it. Indeed, publishers are now developing something called an "Electronic Copyright Management System", an Orwellian "total surveillance system" for the information super-

Touched by lunacy beyond the grave



RICHARD MORRISON

estates, avaricious royalty agencies. But it was bad news for the public. For, when the copyright lapses on a work of art, public access is almost always improved. To give just one example, think of

Wrinkles in the lines

THEATRE: Benedict Nightingale on a charming, if dated, revival of Nell Dunn's rumination on the sexes

Nobody could dislike Nell Dunn's *Steaming*. Its celebration of the unlikely posse of women bathing to save a municipal baths from closure is too well-meaning, too good-natured. But Ian Brown's revival left me wondering if those strengths were not also liabilities. After all, London has become a harder, more brutal place since 1981, when the play first appeared, and there were moments when I felt I was watching a mildly feminist *Passport to Pimlico* — and that particular black-and-white tribute to Cockney togetherness is a lot more than 15 years old.

Rather more than pink skin is bared upon the cracked tiles below the cream gables and spindly green walkway of Robin Don's splendidly atmospheric set. Lives are supposedly exposed too. Posh Nancy (Lynne Miller) has yet to start rebuilding a life devastated by the defection of her awful barrister husband. Vulgar Josie (Jenny Eclair), whose spouse is in prison, is beginning to realise she cannot indefinitely rely on lovers for a living. Dopey Dawn (Julie T. Wallace) has no plans to

escape a mother who wishes to keep her infantile and permanently on pills.

The trouble is that Dunn's characterisation does not go a lot deeper than the skin on display. *Steaming*, her first play, suffers from a tendency to italicise indicators of personality, relationship and class. Dawn's Mum (Sheila Reid) keeps exposing her own mistrust of sex with remarks like (of Dawn's Dad) "he never interlarded with me after she was born". Josie scarcely stops parading her enthusiasm for the male member. Know the obsession, know the psyche.

As a result, Dunn's didacticism is less effective than it might be. She wants us to admire the camaraderie that emerges among these very different women as they amble about in their towels. She wants us to feel that a good cause helps them to discover themselves and grow. Nancy decides there may be life and even love after William. Josie becomes an articulate spokesperson for the group. Even



"A mildly feminist *Passport to Pimlico*": Julie T. Wallace (Dawn), Diane Langton (Violet) and Sheila Reid (Mrs Meadows) in *Steaming*

But some of the behaviour is not altogether believable. Moreover, the ending is too abrupt and Dunn's belief that a London council has a responsibility to provide a nice, safe alternative for 9,000 bathless houses seems touchingly dated. But the piece is amusing enough. Wallace may not be as funny as Brenda Blethyn, who relied less on bulk, bicep and fat-lady fun when she created the role of Dawn, and Eclair may not eradicate memories of a sharp, streetwise Georgina Hale; but they keep the evening moving agreeably along.

There is only one male in the cast, the baths' maintenance man, and he does not appear. His silhouette is seen moving menacingly about his little cabin, and his voice is heard aggressively shouting at Diane Langton's Vi, who runs the place. Further offstage, men are exploiting and rejecting the characters and, in the case of Josie, delivering the odd black eye. They also figure much in the conversation. "They go bald, they go impo-

tent, but they never lose interest in their grub," says Vi, summing up the overall drift.

What makes the play attractive, at least to me, is that it presents us with women who can express their indignation at men, yet admit their need for them. I would not wish it shriller or more ideological. All the same, abrasiveness is missing. Abrasiveness? Toughmindedness? If Dunn had aimed to make the piece speak to the 1990s, she would have been more generous with such unsentimental strengths.



Jack Dee started, and carried on, at the bottom

A cheerful time of waste

IS THIS a smile I see before me? Jack Dee's "king of deadpan" persona, all stares and Pinteresque pauses, has always set him apart from the adrenalin-charged routines of the stand-up crowd. Something seems to have happened along the way, however. There has been a breezier dimension to his work of late, as if the self-proclaimed "miserable sod" had been dipping into the Prozac.

Whether that is entirely a good thing is another matter. The new, improved Dee — who veers between animated Jack the Lad and caring, thirty-something parent — is still a fine comic. When he is at his most amusing a reviewer feels slightly ridiculous at

sion with bodily functions, a dominant feature of his previous show at the Palladium. Scatological humour is, after all, today's socially acceptable, non-sexist equivalent of the mother-in-law joke. Dee extracts plenty of mileage from that source without descending into too much detail.

It does all risk becoming a little repetitive, not to mention solipsistic, after a while. A fleeting reference to the BSE scare and the Channel Tunnel fire was about the nearest we came to topicality all evening. Dee has often spoken of his admiration for Dave Allen, but it's impossible to imagine the Irishman, in his prime, allowing a whole evening to pass without inserting a stiletto into a functionary or two.

One member of the audience, who took up Dee's invitation to scribble comments on a notepad during the interval, tried to prompt him into sharing his thoughts about the new Prime Minister. Dee was not to be tempted beyond a routine bit of schoolboy naughtiness about self-abuse behind the doors of No 10. Even Peter Lilley could do better than that.

Jack Dee Gielgud

trying to reduce the stream-of-consciousness to cold print.

He is certainly entitled to want to move onwards and upwards. But the old individuality is missing at times: all we hear then is just another fast-talking comedian telling jokes about the great British tradition of "throwing up in public".

Fortunately, enough rough edges remain. Somehow I doubt that he will ever acquire the slickness of a fully paid-up member of the Groucho class. Even now, when he can fill a West End theatre, he retains enough of the aura of a chippy outsider. While other new wave comics give the impression that they learnt their craft on a three-year media studies course, Dee is the one who, besides pursuing a career of sorts in catering, once earned a living recycling soiled incontinence pants.

Given that background, he can be forgiven for his obsession with bodily functions.

CLIVE DAVIS

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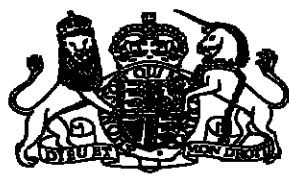
THE SUNDAY TIMES

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THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

May 16: The Duke of York this morning attended a Breakfast Meeting with the Chief of Protocol for the City of San Francisco, California.

His Royal Highness this afternoon departed San Francisco.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

May 16: The Prince Edward this morning received the members of the Los Angeles Justicville Homeless Cricket Team at Buckingham Palace at the start of their English cricket tour.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

May 16: The Princess Royal, Patron, Dunn Nutrition Unit, this morning visited MRC Dunn Clinical Nutrition Centre, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Hills Road, Cambridge, and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire (Mr James Crowden).

Cambridgeshire (Mr James Crowden)

Her Royal Highness, President, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, this afternoon visited Peterborough and Fenland Cancer Centre, 31 Broadway, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, followed by a Reception at the Town Hall, Bridge Street.

The Princess Royal, Patron, SENSE, the National Deafblind and Rubella Association, later opened the "Reachout" Project at Broadgate Lane, Deeping St James, and was received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Lincolnshire (Mrs Bridget Crockett-Eley).

ST JAMES'S PALACE

May 16: The Prince of Wales, Colonel-in-Chief, this morning visited The Royal Dragon Guards on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire.

Royal engagements

Today: The Duke of Kent, as President, the Football Association, accompanied by the Duchess of Kent, will attend the Challenge Cup Final at Wembley Stadium at 2.45.

Lord Falconer of Thoroton

The barony conferred upon Mr Charles Leslie Falconer has been gazetted by the name, style and title of Baron Falconer of Thoroton, of Thoroton in the County of Nottinghamshire.

Lord Hoyle

The barony conferred upon Mr Eric Douglas Harvey Hoyle has been gazetted by the name, style and title of Baron Hoyle, of Warrington in the County of Cheshire.

Church news

Appointments

The Rev Andrew Hawes, Priest-in-charge, Edenham and Witham-on-the-Hill: to be also Rural Dean of Belislow (Lincoln).

The Rev Cecil Heatley, Vicar, St Saviour, Peckham: to be also Rural Dean of Dulwich (Southwark).

The Rev John Honour, Deputy Chaplain, HM Prison, Wakefield (Southwark): to be Chaplain, The Mount, Bovingdon (St Albans).

The Rev Geoffrey Howell, Priest-

in-charge, St James, Cradley; St John the Baptist, Marnthorpe; St John the Baptist, Storrage: to be Chaplain of Hereford Cathedral Junior School and Successor of Hereford Cathedral (Hereford).

The Rev Michael Howes, Vicar, Ness Group: to be Rector, Basingham, Auburn w Haddington, Thurlby, Noron Disney, Carlton-le-Moorland and Stapleford (Lincoln).

The Rev Robert Iretton, Vicar, Falconwood (Rochester): to be Vicar, St Michael, Stanwix w St Mark Belah, Carlisle (Carlisle).

The Rev Geoffrey Howell, Priest-

Weekend birthdays

Pope John Paul II celebrates his 77th birthday tomorrow.

TODAY: The Earl of Arl, KT, 71; Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Baird, 73; Marshal of the RAF Sir Michael Beetham, 74; Miss Cicely Berry, voice director, Royal Shakespeare Company, 71; Sir Rodric Braithwaite, diplomat, 65; Professor D. Cameron Watt, FBA, historian, 69; Sir Charles Cawley, scientist, 90; Mr Timothy Cordy, director, Town and Country Planning Association, 48; Professor J.D. Cragg, electrical engineer, 52; Mr Paul Crossley, concert pianist, 53; Mr Hugh Dykes, former MP, 58; Mr J.R. Evans, chairman, Hyder (formerly Welsh Water), 46; Sir John Garlick, civil servant, 76; Sir Ronald Halse, former deputy chairman, British Steel, 70; Professor Raymond Hide, FRS, geophysicist, 68; Sir Colin Hope, chairman and chief executive, T & N, 64; Mr Simon Hughes, MP, 46; Mr A.A. Johnson, MP, 47; Professor Arthur Jones, Principal, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, 67; Mr Sugar Ray Leonard, boxer, 41; Sir Eric Mansford, former president, Westland Aircraft, 91; Professor Vivian Moses, biotechnologist, 65; Miss Birgit Nilsson, soprano, 79; Sir Alec Ogilvie, former chairman, Powell Duffryn, 84; Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Packard, 94; Major-General D.A. Penne-

Caroline Charles, the fashion designer, is 55 tomorrow; Miriam Margolyes, the actress, will be 56

father, Commandant General Maritime, 52; Sir Edward Playfair, civil servant, 82; Canon P.B. Price, general secretary, U.S.P.C., 53; Mr Michael Roberts, jockey, 43; Lord Toms, 73; Captain Sir Miles Tombs, former deputy master, Trinity House, 74; Lieutenant-General Sir David Young, 71.

TOMORROW: Sir Richard Bop, MP, 70; Mr John Bruton, Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, 50; Mr John Clement, former chairman, Unigate Group, 65; Mr Perry Como, singer, 85; Sir Patrick Cormack, MP, 58; Mr Graham Davis, golfer, 46; Mr Rodham Dilley, cricketer, 38; Professor Sir Anthony Epstein, FRS, pathologist, 70; Sir Anthony

Fell, former MP, 83; Professor G.R. Hall, nuclear scientist, 69; Rear-Admiral P.G. Hamersley, 69; Lord Hartwell, 80; Mr Keith Hellawell, Chief Constable, West Yorkshire, 55; Mr G.M.C. Kilson, former Principal, Central School of Speech and Drama, 75; Sir Geoffrey Littler, former chairman, County NatWest Group, 67; Professor M.S. Longair, astronomer, 56; the Marquess of Reading, 55; Mr Peter Ryan, former national director, Police Training, 53; Lord Sir John of Fawley, 67; Mr Jacques Sauter, President, BNP, 60; Mr N.P. (Nobby) Stiles, footballer, 55; Professor A. Marshall Stoneham, FRS, physicist, 57; Mr Charles Wintour, journalist, 80.

Reception

Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners

Sir John Vinelott, Chairman of the Trust Law Committee, was the principal guest at the Chairman's annual reception of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners, held at Trinity House on Tuesday, May 13.

Mr Geoffrey Shindler, Chairman of the Society, presided. Members of the Judiciary, the Bar, the Accountancy, Taxation and Banking professions with members of STEP Council were among others present.

Major General Sir George Burns

A memorial service for Major General Sir George Burns, G.C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., will take place at the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, Hertfordshire, on Wednesday, July 2, at 2.30pm.

University news

Dr Howard Jenkinson, Professor and Director of the Molecular Oral Biology Unit, Otago University, has been appointed to the Chair of Oral Biology.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Edward Jenner, discoverer of vaccination, Berkeley, Gloucestershire, 1749; Caroline, Queen Consort of King George IV, Brunswick, 1768; Anna Jameson, writer, Dublin, 1794; Sir Joseph Norman Lockyer, astronomer, Rugby, 1836; Erik Satie, composer, Honfleur, France, 1866; Henri Barbusse, novelist, Amiens, 1873; Dorothy Richardson, novelist, Abingdon, Berkshire, 1873.

DEATHS: Sandro Botticelli, painter, Florence, 1510; Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury 1597-15; Catherine I, Empress of Russia 1725-27; St Petersburg, 1727; Sir Arthur Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, statesman, Paris, 1838; Paul Dulka, composer, Paris, 1935.

Comic Cuts, the first weekly comic paper, was published in London by Alfred Northcliffe, 1890.

The relief of Maleskig, 1900. The Daylight Saving Act was passed, 1916.

TOMORROW: BIRTHS: Joseph Butler, theologian, Worcester, Berkshire, 1692; Hugh Clapperton, African explorer, Annan, Scotland, 1788; Oliver Heaviside, physicist, London, 1850; Bertrand Russell,

3rd Earl Russell, philosopher and mathematician, Treleck, Gwent, 1872; Walter Gropius, architect, Berlin, 1883; Dame Margot Fonteyn, prima ballerina, Surrey, 1919; DEATHS: Elias Ashmole, antiquary, 1692; Pierre de Beaumarchais, dramatist, Paris, 1799; Charles Merrett, novelist, Box Hill, Surrey, 1909; Isaac Albéniz, pianist and composer, Camboles-Bains, 1909; Gustav Mahler, composer, Vienna, 1911.

Napoleon Bonaparte was proclaimed Emperor of France, 1804. The United Free Church of Scotland was formed, 1844. Allied forces captured Monte Cassino, Italy, 1944. The European Convention on Human Rights came into effect, 1954.

Montgomeryshire Society

Mr D.H. Owen, President of the Montgomeryshire Society, was the host at a reception held last night at Burlington House, Piccadilly, to mark the anniversary of the first meeting of the society in May 1927. Delegates of four neighbouring societies, representatives of the Welsh community in London and past and present members of the society were among those present.

Memorial service

Mr T.H. Bridgewater

A service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Mr Thornton Howard (Tony) Bridgewater, former Chief Engineer, BBC Television, was held yesterday at St John's Wood Church. The Rev John Slater officiated, assisted by Canon John Tester.

Mr J. Stuart Sanson read the lesson, Mr Nicholas Moss, Head of Policy Management, BBC, broadcast, read from *Sermons, Soap and Television* by John Logie Baird and Mr Peter Dinmock read *Mr Valiant-for-truth Summation* from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Mr C.R. Longman gave an address.

Ms Marianne Connelly, soprano, and Ms Marie-Josée Edmondson and Ms Mary Newman-Pound, mezzo-sopranos, accompanied by Mr Colin Stuart, piano, sang *Three Little Maids from School* from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Among others present were:

Mr and Mrs Anthony Bridgewater (son and daughter-in-law), Mr Alexander Bridgewater, Mrs Francis Taylor, Mr and Mrs A. Bell, Mr Michael Bell, Mr and Mrs A. Hunt, Mrs Dorothy Mason, Miss Patricia Wells.

Mr Will Wyatt (Chief Executive, BBC), Mr and Mrs Roger Clay (a consultant to the Director-General) and Lady Cox and other guests.

Mr and Mrs Anthony Bridgewater (son and daughter-in-law), Mr Alexander Bridgewater, Mrs Francis Taylor, Mr and Mrs A. Bell, Mr Michael Bell, Mr and Mrs A. Hunt, Mrs Dorothy Mason, Miss Patricia Wells.

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Mr and Mrs Anthony Bridgewater (son and daughter-in-law), Mr Alexander Bridgewater, Mrs Francis Taylor, Mr and Mrs A. Bell, Mr Michael Bell, Mr and Mrs A. Hunt, Mrs Dorothy Mason, Miss Patricia Wells.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr N.D.P. Trustram Eve

The engagement is announced between Nicholas, younger son of Colonel the Hon Peter and Mrs Trustram Eve, of Barton End, Gloucestershire, and Caroline, daughter of Mr Michael Maydon, of Ashmanham, Norfolk, and Mrs Dawn Maydon, of Inverlorn, Norfolk.

Mr A.J.A. Tulloch and Mrs J.A. Yeo. The engagement is announced between Andrew, eldest son of Mr John Tulloch, of Courance, Lockertie, and the late Hon Mrs Tulloch, and Jane, daughter of Major and Mrs William Lane, of Peter Tavy, Tavishack.

Mr G.J. Douglas and Miss H.M. Cuthbert. The engagement is announced between Graham, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Rodney Douglas, of Woking, Surrey, and Helena, daughter of Mr and Mrs Nigel Cuthbert, of Holt, Norfolk.

Mr W.J. Baskerville and Miss E.V. Perceve. The engagement is announced between William Jasper, twin son of Mr Jasper Enderby, of London SW18, and Mrs Robert Phillips, of London SW18, and Emma Victoria, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs David Perceve, of Litley Green, Essex.

Mr C. Fox and Miss S.K. Stannards. The engagement is announced between Christian, son of Mr and Mrs G. Fox, of Clare, Suffolk, and Kate, daughter of Mrs D. Stannards, of Peacock Hall, Sudbury, Suffolk.

Dr J.K. Gregory

The engagement is announced between Jonathan, son of Professor and Mrs Kenneth Gregory, of Blackheath, London, and Virginia, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Andrew Gray, of Plymouth, Devon.

Mr A. Munn and Miss M.M. Hopkins. The engagement is announced between Alistair, son of Mr and Mrs Alexander Munn, of Coombe Bisset, Salisbury, Wiltshire, and Samira, younger daughter of Major and Mrs John Hopkins, of Donhead St Andrew, Shaffersbury, Dorset.

Mr R.M.A. Power and Miss P.M. Keenan. The engagement is announced between Richard, son of Mr and Mrs Michael Power, of Compton, Surrey, and Patricia, daughter of Mr and Mrs Michael Keenan, of Moseley, Birmingham.

Mr N.A. Ring and Miss V.L. Phelps. The engagement is announced between Nicholas, son of Mr Thor Christian, Ring, of Oslo, Norway, and the late Mrs Gillian Ring, of Nottingham, and Vanessa, daughter of Mr and Mrs David Phelps, of Hadley Wood, Hertfordshire.

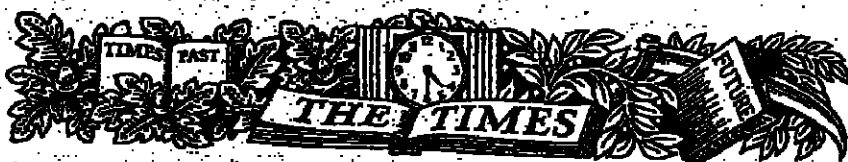
Mr A.G. Thorpe and Miss L.M. Kirkpatrick. The engagement is announced between Alistair, younger son of Mr and Mrs Barrie Thorpe, of Boudry, Suffolk, and Lucy, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Gavin Kirkpatrick, of Dorchester, Dorset.

Dinners

HM Lord High Commissioner

Lord Macdonald of Boardman, Her Majesty's Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and Lady Macdonald yesterday arrived in Edinburgh to take up residence at the Palace of Holyroodhouse and last night entertained the following at dinner:

The Lord and Lady Provost of Edinburgh, the Lord Chancellor and Lady Irvine, the Lord Mayor of London, the Lord Bishop of Edinburgh, the Lord Bishop of Glasgow, the Lord Bishop of Aberdeen, the Lord Bishop of Dundee, the Lord Bishop of Stirling, the Lord Bishop of Brechin, the Lord Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, the Lord Bishop of Moray, the Lord Bishop of Ross and the Isles, the Lord Bishop of Caithness, the Lord Bishop of Sutherland and the Isles, the Lord Bishop of Shetland, the Lord Bishop of Orkney and the Isles, the Lord Bishop of Na h-Eileanan Siar, the Lord Bishop of the Western Isles, the Lord Bishop of the Hebrides, the Lord Bishop of the Outer Hebrides, the Lord Bishop of the Inner Hebrides, the Lord Bishop of the Shetland Islands, the Lord Bishop of the Orkney Islands, the Lord Bishop of the Na h-Eileanan Siar, the Lord Bishop of the Western Isles, the Lord Bishop of the Hebrides, the Lord Bishop of the Outer Hebrides, the Lord Bishop of the Inner Hebrides, the Lord Bishop 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BLAIR'S BRAVE START

Labour is right: talks cannot wait for terrorists

The Northern Ireland peace process was both John Major's unfinished business and, even though it was partial, a genuine achievement, unambiguously his own. His skills and commitment secured one ceasefire and created room for hope. They also created doubts that his successor could achieve as much. There is a long way to go before Tony Blair can match Mr Major's success, let alone surpass him and bring lasting peace to Ulster. But the Prime Minister's speech yesterday was an impressive first step.

Mr Blair's rhetoric should provide a nervous Unionist majority with the reassurance it seeks. Arguing that "none of us in this hall today, even the youngest, is likely to see Northern Ireland as anything but a part of the United Kingdom", Mr Blair was almost echoing the words of the former Unionist leader James Molyneux. After so many changes in the past three years, Labour, like the weather, has almost lost the capacity to surprise. There has, however, been a genuine thaw towards the Unionists.

It is striking that less than three years ago the declared ambition of the then Northern Ireland spokesman, Kevin McNamara, was to be the last Secretary of State for the province. By making clear that he is personally committed to the Union and has no plans to put Ulster on the slippery slope to a sell-out, Mr Blair can, with greater authority, persuade the Unionists that change is the price of making the current constitutional realities more acceptable to nationalists.

Unionists have been suspicious of some of the changes proposed by London and Dublin in their Framework Documents, not least dynamic cross-border bodies, because they regard them as engines for Irish unity. If, however, changes are designed in a spirit of underpinning, not undermining the Union, then Unionists should show generosity.

Cynical, or childish, Unionists such as Ian Paisley who are disposed to wonder if a Labour Prime Minister can really be sincere in his support should take comfort from

Martin McGuinness's sour reaction to Mr Blair's speech. Sinn Féin was understandably disappointed by the Prime Minister's pledge that he would not be a persuader for Irish unity. But republicans should not merely snipe from the sidelines. Mr Blair is giving them the chance to move out of the darkness and into the political daylight. They should take it, for the sake of their voters and all Ireland's people.

By authorising contact between government officials and Sinn Féin Mr Blair is showing a genuine willingness to give republicans the benefit of what little doubt there is. Republicanism has often elevated violent means above political ends; even when pursuing its political goals, violence has been central to its strategy. It is hard to see republicans permanently forswearing violence now; yet they must do so if Sinn Féin wants to enter talks. There can be no weakening. The requirement that they abandon the armalite is not a quibble cooked up by opponents who need an excuse to keep republicans out of talks. It is a point of principle on which democrats must unite if democracy is not to be fatally compromised. In sticking to that principle, but trying everything within his power to promote a ceasefire, Mr Blair is both defending democracy and affirming his sincere desire for Sinn Féin to be included in any settlement. Republicans should grasp the olive branch or face the consequences.

Mr Blair has said that if Sinn Féin do not join talks now, "the settlement train is leaving" and he will reach a deal without them. His desire to broker an agreement without the republicans if they continue their terror campaign is politically brave and morally right. It depends, however, on those other parties, particularly the SDLP and the Dublin Government, sharing that view. The people of England learnt during the election campaign that republicans are more than capable of stopping some trains. Ireland's nationalists should make it clear they will not allow democracy to be derailed.

LABOUR UNDERGROUND

Three ways to breathe life into the Tube

There are few campaign promises harder for the Government to translate into action than its pledge to improve public transport. City centres are being suffocated by traffic, yet neither Government nor local authorities has the money for the integrated schemes that planners recommend. Nowhere is the need for action more pressing or the sums more daunting than in London. The Underground, the network that keeps the capital moving, is still reeling from the cuts of the last Conservative budget; and with a capital shortfall of some £700 million almost all the schemes to improve the outdated system and make it self-financing are to be axed. John Prescott, the transport and environment supremo, who called his transport ministers to Chevening for a brainstorming session yesterday, will have to move fast.

The last Government believed there were few votes to be won in transport and even fewer in London. Kenneth Clarke's prejudice was challenged by the City, tourist authorities and all those who were concerned with London's global competitiveness. On a typical weekday some 23 million journeys are made on the Tube. The system carries significantly more passengers than the entire national railway network.

After years of relative neglect, what the system needs is investment, on a massive scale. Labour has three choices. There is the left-wing solution of pouring in some £400 million a year for five years, by the end of which the Underground — which already makes an operating profit — would be able

to pay for ongoing repairs. The problem is the Treasury limit on borrowing. The right-wing solution is privatisation, a last-minute promise by the Conservatives which proved unpopular with Londoners. This could bring in capital, but the complexities of how the system should be subdivided and sold off are enormous. Labour left itself a loophole by opposing "wholesale privatisation"; it could, perhaps, countenance contracting out the system while retaining London Transport as a regulatory body. Thirdly, there is the middle option of using the private finance initiative. This is the least satisfactory, courting private interest, scheme by scheme, makes long-term planning almost impossible, and amounts simply to running the Underground on hire purchase, with the bills still coming in at the end.

Glenda Jackson, who has immediate responsibility for Britain's railways, could look further, however. How about a London levy to pay for transport infrastructure? Or a tax on cars coming into the centre that is earmarked for public transport? The Treasury hates hypothecated taxes; but Labour has promised to think the unthinkable. Most capital cities take public transport, generally heavily subsidised, almost as an urban right. The efficiently managed Underground, by contrast, charges market rates. The public is prepared to pay; it was on the road to recovery before Mr Clarke's axe. Labour owes it not only to London but to Britain's prosperity to secure the system and redeem its campaign promise.

RHINEGOLD

Germany sets new standards in creative accounting

For a year and more Theo Waigel, the German Finance Minister, has soothed German doubts about monetary union by insisting that, in order to qualify, governments must fulfil the Maastricht criteria to the last decimal point. EMU would not threaten German fiscal rigour, because Europe would be obliged to adopt German practice.

Now Herr Waigel has set an example of "German practice" that far surpasses in ingenuity anything that Italian, Belgian or French bureaucrats have come up with. He has taken the Wagner script and improved on it. Alberich stole the gold from the Rhine maidens; but Herr Waigel claims that it is possible to raid the Bundesbank's gold reserves and pocket the profit, without touching a single ounce of the precious stuff.

It is all so simple. By law, the Bundesbank gold is valued at its purchase price, a modest 13.69 billion marks. If revalued at its market price, it would be worth 42.17 billion marks more — which coincidentally happens to be the size of this year's hole in Germany's accounts. This abruptly much more valuable hoard will of course stay in the vaults; Herr Waigel would never dream of selling off the family treasure. The happy man has discovered that he does not need to; he can simply transfer the Bundesbank's resulting windfall to the "redemption fund for historic burdens", thus reducing Germany's public debt and deficit at a stroke without actually paying any debt off.

Add in some accelerated sales of government shares in Deutsche Telekom and bingo! Germany will meet the 1997 Maa-

tricht targets which it would otherwise miss. In the marketplace, this trick is not new. Companies used to revalue land and other assets and call it profit until the Accounting Standards Board spilt the game.

Now that Germany has revealed the secret of modern alchemy, turning gold into paper wealth, other European governments may be tempted to follow suit. Purists might not accept a Greek claim that the market value of the Parthenon had been applied to the national accounts, and Herr Waigel's thick eyebrows, ever vigilant when it comes to the mote in Italian eyes, would be quick to furrow at a "revaluation" of the Colosseum. But he could hardly object if Gordon Brown were to transfer the market value of Ministry of Defence land to the Treasury books, since that is potentially saleable.

There are just three snags. The first is one of timing: the Bundesbank law must first be changed and there are doubts about whether this magic carpet will be ready in time to swell the 1997 accounts. The second is that no amount of fiscal fudging will alter Germany's underlying problems. The third is political. It does not take genius to understand the rule that debt does not shrink without being repaid. Herr Waigel may have his way; monetary union may start on time. But it will start on a fraudulent foundation. German voters used to believe that creative accounting stopped at the German frontier. The Rhine maidens have yet to be heard, and their verdict is likely to be severe. The "transfer" of the Rhinegold laid the fateful trail to Götterdämmerung.

United Tory front on windfall tax

From Mr Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP for Rushcliffe (Conservative) and others

Sir, The windfall tax (reports, May 16) is the corner-stone of the Government's welfare-to-work plans. No Conservative believes that getting more of our people back to work is not a worthy cause. But we do think that the proposed method is fraught with danger.

It is simply folly to believe that the tax will be paid by "fat cat" directors, or that there are huge sums of "excess profits" locked away in bank vaults, ripe for the plundering of the Labour Government. The truth is that the burden of the tax will fall on ordinary customers, shareholders and employees.

Even a look at just one aspect of the windfall tax — its impact on pension funds — shows how hard-working people will be hit. Pension funds are amongst the biggest shareholders in the utilities. The windfall tax will wipe millions of pounds off share values. So pensions will be lower. Even if the tax is already factored into some share prices, this simply means that the damage has already been done.

No one disputes the good intentions behind Labour's proposed welfare-to-work scheme. But subsidised job-creation is not nearly as effective as real growth in the economy. It is no justification for damaging hard-working people's pensions, putting up bills, hitting vital investment programmes and threatening jobs.

Labour's claim that their plan is legally watertight looks more questionable by the day. A legal opinion obtained by Aims of Industry in January stated that there is "a powerful cocktail of possible grounds for legal challenge". The result could be "considerable delay", and Labour would have to raise other taxes to fund their scheme.

Labour's big idea is coming unstuck as we write. If it succeeds, it will hit ordinary people hard. Conservatives oppose it.

Yours faithfully,
KENNETH CLARKE,
STEPHEN DORRELL,
WILLIAM HAGUE,
MICHAEL HOWARD,
PETER LILLEY,
JOHN REDWOOD,
Conservative Central Office,
32 Smith Square, SW1,
May 16.

Legal challenge

From Mr Malcolm Hill

Sir, The news ("Windfall tax faces legal challenge", May 16) that two companies likely to be targeted by the Chancellor are seeking legal advice is to be expected by commercial directors, who desire to operate within the law.

The Government has led the electorate to believe that the windfall tax will fall on the victims only and provide funds to relieve unemployment. Indeed they have been encouraged to admire the brilliant imposition, whereby thousands of young people can be put back to work at the expense of a few "fat cats". But the two claims are untrue.

The windfall tax will be recovered within a year or two by the victims increasing their prices; the real payers will be the users of fixed and mobile telephones, gas, water, electricity and aircraft, and also of goods and services whose producers use the same services.

Government has never relieved unemployment by imposing taxes on the people. It may claim a particular scheme has created employment but when such claims are balanced against the unemployment caused by the taxation there is no gain.

Yours faithfully,
MALCOLM HILL,
58A Abingdon Road, W8,
May 16.

From Mr Richard A. Edwards

Sir, I was somewhat puzzled to read that most City lawyers were of the opinion that a windfall tax could not be contested in the courts on the grounds that an Act of Parliament is beyond challenge in our courts. As Mr Justice Hoffman has observed, the EC treaty is in effect a constitution (Stoke-on-Trent City Council v BSC [1991]).

No domestic law, including an Act of Parliament, which conflicts with EU law is valid. EU law is supreme, unlike our Parliament.

Thus if the targets of the windfall tax can argue that it violates EU law they might either challenge it on those grounds in our courts or apply to have the matter referred to the European Court of Justice.

In either case they should, of course, apply for an interim injunction preventing the Crown enforcing the Act until the question of its legality is determined. All of this has been long settled ever since the judgment of the House of Lords in *ex parte Factortame* (No 2) [1990].

Yours etc,
RICHARD A. EDWARDS,
60 Queen's Road,
Devizes, Wiltshire,
May 16.

Weekend Money letters, page 41

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Queen of Sheba retains her mystery

From Dr D. W. Phillipson, President of the British Institute in Eastern Africa

Sir, As director of the current archaeological excavations at Aksum, Ethiopia, I trust that I may correct certain inaccuracies in Michael Binyon's report of May 9, "Yemen tests wisdom of Solomon with claim to Queen of Sheba".

It has long been believed, and the recent excavations by the British Institute in Eastern Africa have confirmed, that occupation of the Aksum site itself extends no further back than the early 1st century AD, although older settlement is attested in the immediate vicinity. Legends about the Queen of Sheba recall her as a contemporary of Solomon around the 10th century BC. There is no evidence for developed civilisation at Aksum at such an early date.

You report that archaeologists at Aksum have found coins, etc. dating from the time of the Queen of Sheba. This is not only untrue, it is impossible. Aksumite coinage did not begin until about AD 270. Coinage was not used anywhere in the 10th century BC. Neither my excavations nor those directed in collaboration by colleagues from Italy and the United States have revealed materials contemporary with the Queen of Sheba.

Legends linking both Yemen and Ethiopia with the Queen of Sheba may be explained by reference to the very close cultural links between the two areas which prevailed for more than one thousand years before the rise of Islam.

Yours truly,
DAVID W. PHILLIPSON,
President,
British Institute in Eastern Africa,
Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge,
May 12.

From Mr Nigel Groom

Sir, The Queen of Sheba will of course continue to beguile tourists with her mystery. Her connection with either Ethiopia or South Arabia (ancient Saba or Sheba) are questionable, however.

The latest chronological researches now date the first known king of Saba to around 800 BC, well after the time of Solomon (c.950 BC), and there is no evidence of trading between south and north Arabia before the 8th century BC. The Israelites did not begin to use south Arabian aromatics (frankincense and myrrh) in their rituals until the 7th century BC.

Moreover, Sabaean rulers were invariably male. But genealogical tables in the Old Testament testify to more than one Sheba, while there are

records of several 7th and 8th century tribal queens in northern Arabia. Scholars therefore tend to believe that the Queen of Sheba may have been the ruler of a small north Arabian tribe of that name which traded with Jerusalem (or, more probably, with Tyre, travelling through Jerusalem to get there).

Solomon, not a very powerful ruler, had a good propaganda machine to exaggerate his importance. Also he seems to have had a keen eye for pretty girls. Perhaps he was just bewitched by the daughter of a visiting merchant from a north Arabian group of Sabaeans who was passing through with a trading caravan.

Yours sincerely,
NIGEL GROOM
(Author, *Frankincense and Myrrh: A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade*, Longman, 1981),
23 Condon Road, SW6,
May 11.

From Professor Edward Ullendorff, FBA

Sir, With all due respect to Michael Binyon, Emperor Haile Selassie was not the "Lion of Judah" (the quotation is taken from Revelation v. 5); the New Testament reference was merely the motto of the Ethiopian Crown in general. The late Emperor certainly did not "insist" that the Queen of Sheba (Ethiopian Makeda) married King Solomon: he knew that the Ethiopian national saga — *Kebrā Nagast* (*Glory of the Kings*) — referred to intimate relations between them which resulted in a son, Menelik, the putative founder of the Ethiopian dynasty.

Arabic and other versions of the story of the Queen of Sheba are essentially based on the Hebrew *Targum Sheni* to the Book of Esther and, of course, ultimately on the texts of 1 Kings x and 11 Chronicles ix.

I was glad to see Michael Binyon referring to my late colleagues Bob Serjeant and especially Freddie Beeston, who certainly were prominent exponents of south Arabian epigraphy; but they did not express views on the historicity or otherwise of the Queen of Sheba.

There is no need to go for illumination as far as Chartres. A beautiful window in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, depicts the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon: the King is seated on his throne and between him and the Queen is an area of blue glass representing the pool of the Muslim legend.

I am, Sir, yours truly,
EDWARD ULLENDORFF,
4 Bladon Close, Oxford,
May 9.

Red Cross in Zaire

From the Director General of the British Red Cross Society

Sir, On May 8, World Red Cross day, 171 Red Cross national societies around the world celebrated the humanitarian achievements of the International Red Cross movement.

Tragically, that day also brought the news that ten of our colleagues from the Zairean Red Cross had been killed the day before whilst selflessly working to help victims of the war in Zaire.

The tragedy occurred when the ten first-aid workers were assisting people wounded in the fighting between government and rebel forces which had been raging in the town of Kenge, 200km east of the capital, Kinshasa. During the fighting some 200 civilians were reportedly killed and over 120 were admitted to hospital.

Despite the severity of the fighting Zairean Red Cross first-aiders were prepared to risk their lives in order to evacuate and treat the wounded. Since last October, when the war began in eastern Zaire, the Zairean

Select committees

From the Director of Charter 88

Sir, Your leader ("The select few", May 14) will be welcomed by those of us who have drawn attention over the years to the important role of select committees within Parliament. They should provide an alternative career structure for backbench MPs — and every one of these MPs should be provided with a place on such a committee.

But one further step could be taken to make the committee structure at Westminster work more effectively. The special standing committee procedure — recommended by Parliament itself 20 years ago — could be used to give all Bills proper scrutiny. This committee stage would allow MPs to question both ministers and civil servants as to the purpose of the Bill, to take evidence from interested groups affected by the legislation, and to highlight problems with draft legislation at an early stage when they might more easily be remedied.

This procedure already exists within Parliament's standing orders, and the Government can refer any Bill to such a committee. Perhaps the time has come for a reform-minded Government to resurrect the Special Standing Committee to ensure proper legislative scrutiny — particularly in the face of such a large parliamentary majority.

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW PUDEPHATT,
Director, Charter 88,
Exmouth House, 3-11 Pine Street, ECI,
May 14.

Dearth of British music at Proms

From Dr David Green

Sir, Notwithstanding the "20 superlatives" identified by Richard Morrison in the 1997 BBC Proms season (Arts, May 8), the steady decline in the representation of British music at these concerts continues unabated.

I calculate that the time allotted to British composers this year is the lowest since you published an article by Simon Heffer deploring the situation, "Forward with Britten", on August 10, 1985. Since then you have published two letters from me making the same point (August 17, 1985, and September 16, 1995).

Not a single note of either Holst or Delius has been played for the last three years, and this year there is no Walton; audiences are still denied such standard repertoire works as *The Planets* or *Brigg Fair*.

The Gramophone, in its standard repertoire recommended recordings, lists the 2nd symphonies of both Sibelius and Vaughan Williams; yet the Sibelius has been performed 11 times in the last 18 years and the Vaughan Williams only twice.

Something must be done urgently to redress this imbalance. Once again, the decision of the BBC's Controller of Music, who has autonomy in devising the Proms, should be seriously questioned.

Yours sincerely,
D. W. GREEN,
34 Ponsbury Terrace, SW1,
May 14.

Nonsense verse

From Mr Jim Burt

Sir, Derwent May's article on "nonsense", which I greatly enjoyed (May 10), was headed "... an innocent vision of paradise delights us", and gave an example of "tangeltalk":

I went to the pictures near Tuesday
and took a front seat at the back.
I said to the lady behind me,
I cannot see over your hat.

As a youngster in my home town of Middlesbrough in the early 1930s we sang:

I went to the pictures tomorrow
and took a front seat at the back.
A lady she gave me an apple,
I ate it and gave her it back.

My children and grandchildren have been the appreciative recipients of that particular verse and a few others, like ...

If a gumboll could boil oil,
how much oil could a gumboll boil
if a gumboll could boil oil?

Between verses the chorus was:
That was a cute little rhyme,
tell us another one do.

Yours sincerely,
JIM BENNETT,
42a Windsor Road,
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire,
May 12.

From Mr Brian Lapping

Sir, "Lear's Owl and the Pussy-Cat need a stout boat", writes Derwent May.

A stout boat?
Derwent May
Got carried away
In his quest for an adjective new.
Stout's a good word
And it's fairly absurd,
But one Lear perched on a perchew:
"Beautiful", yes. "Pea green", yes.
"Stout"? Oh my fur and whiskers, no.

Yours truly,
BRIAN LAPPING,
61 Eton Avenue, NW3,
May 12.

Exploding rats?

From Mr Peter L. G. Bateman

Sir, The suggestion that a phosphorus-loaded, self-igniting rat destroyed a thatched cottage (Letters, May 9) ignores the fact that phosphorus-based rat poisons have been banned for the past 36 years under The Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962.

Today we have to kill rats with kindness, avoiding any apparent symptoms of suffering and preferably ensuring that they all die in good health, following additional legislation (Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986).

Incidentally, the insurance industry has estimated that 20 per cent of fires "of unknown origin" are caused by rodents gnawing electricity cables.

Yours truly,
PETER L. G. BATEMAN
(President, The British Pest Control Association, 1963-84),
Foyings,
The Limes, Felbridge,
East Grinstead, West Sussex,
May 9.

Have a heart

From Mr E. P. Churchill

Sir, Too many of the contributions to the lower half of the Letters page come from people who apparently want to kill something. Could a more enlightened selection be made from the post-bag, or should I switch to a paper which might be less depressing to read?

Yours faithfully,
E. P. CHURCHILL,
26 Sugworth Lane,
Abingdon, Oxfordshire,
May 13.

NEWS

Blair takes gamble for Ulster peace

■ Tony Blair took a gamble for peace in Northern Ireland yesterday when he offered Sinn Féin the chance of meeting government officials before an IRA ceasefire. In a speech which he had been preparing since well before the election, the Prime Minister said in Belfast that his radical plan was "one further effort" to bring Sinn Féin into the full political process. Page 1

Kidnap victim tells of 'pure terror'

■ A kidnap victim described 40 minutes of "pure terror" after she was held at knifepoint and bundled into the boot of her car. Nova Hughes, 24, decided to make a public appeal for information about the abduction and robbery in the belief that her attacker is a serious threat to other women. Page 1

Mobutu goes

President Mobutu of Zaire left his capital having lost his grip on power after 32 years of autocratic rule. Pages 1, 16

Alcopop inquiry

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, ordered an urgent investigation into the sale and marketing of alcopop drinks. Page 2

Jail for threats

A conservatory supplier who threatened to send in the "hard men" to deal with a dissatisfied customer was jailed. Page 3

Dubai row

The Foreign Office has been asked to intervene over a Briton being held in prison in Dubai, with no reasons given. Page 5

'No win, no fee'

An expansion in "no win, no fee" litigation and tax incentives to encourage litigation insurance was called for by the head of civil justice. Page 9

Meacher brings promise of rain

■ The Met Office predicted 30 days of rain, three days before Michael Meacher, the Environment Secretary, meets water companies for a drought summit. Thundery showers could strike anywhere over the next two or three days; after that, further rain is likely in southern Britain. Page 1

Vandals close convent

A Teeside convent has had to close after 70 years because of repeated break-ins and vandalism by local youths. Page 10

Irish manifesto

Fianna Fail has put tax-cuts and crime at the top of its election manifesto and is supporting moves for contacts with Sinn Féin. Page 14

Hague promise

William Hague has offered Conservatives an early chance to back him or sack him if he is chosen to replace John Major. Page 15

Workfare wages

The White House has called for people in "workfare" to be paid the minimum wage. Page 17

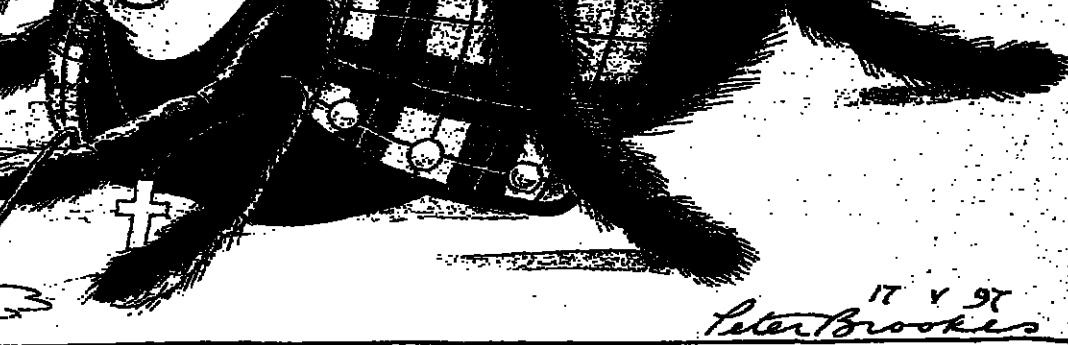
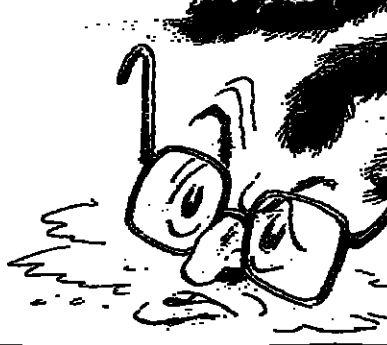
Waigel under fire

Theo Waigel, the German Finance Minister, was criticised for his planned use of German gold reserves to plug the country's yawning budget deficit. Page 19

NATURE NOTES

Black Widowcombe Spider
(*Somethingus ofthenightus*)

Venomous and vengeful, its bite induces paralysis. The male is then killed and eaten by sucking in as liquid. (Just dessert)



OPINION

Blair's brave start: Tony Blair's desire to broker an agreement without the republicans is politically brave and morally right. Page 23

Labour underground: City centres are being suffocated by traffic yet neither Government nor local authorities has the money for the integrated schemes that planners recommend. Page 23

COLUMNS

Simon Jenkins: Every word written last week about Covent Garden Opera was nonsense. Page 22

Magnus Linklater: The intended Scottish parliament building is too small, too cramped and too confrontational. The best idea would be an international architectural competition. Page 22

BUSINESS

Post review: The Government announced an immediate review of options for giving the Post Office greater commercial freedom. Page 27

Up in smoke: Peter Wilson, chairman of Gallaher, may make more than £1 million if it is taken over. Page 27

SPORT

Football: The FA Cup Final provides an exotic contest between Chelsea and Middlesbrough, the clubs that have invested most heavily in foreign players. Page 52

Cricket: Gloucestershire were confirmed early championship leaders with a win over Surrey. Page 46

Too long: Richard Morrison enjoys a moan about the EU's draft decision to extend literary copyright to 70 years. Page 21

Wrinkled: Neil Dunn's 16-year-old rumination on the sexes, *Steaming*, is revived in the West End, but while its charm remains intact, Benedict Nightingale feels something is missing for Nineties audiences. Page 21

MAGAZINE

Family tree: A Mussolini with a message. Page 8
Japan is welcomed in the valleys. Page 14
Summer hunt. Page 56

Weekend

Arctic: All-woman expedition to the pole. Pages 1, 2



Property: Libraries and a Gothic pile. Pages 9-12
Home life: Growing up an only child. Page 17

10 15

Dynamo Di: A new star of the ballet. Page 6
Win: Meeting heroes. Page 3
Film: The 1015 awards. Page 5

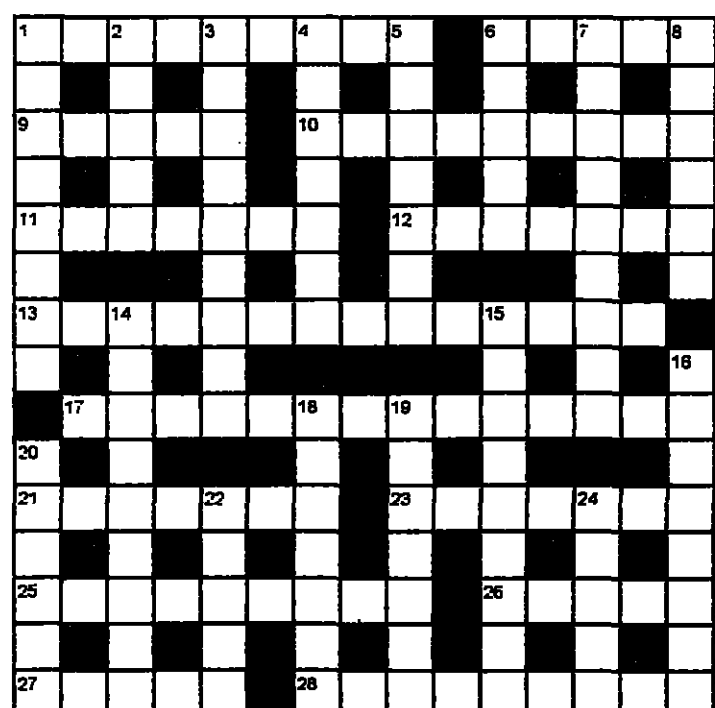


Special brew: The return of café society. Page 4
Food: Nature's treasure. Page 7
Books: Film future; Matthew Parris. Pages 9-14

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,482

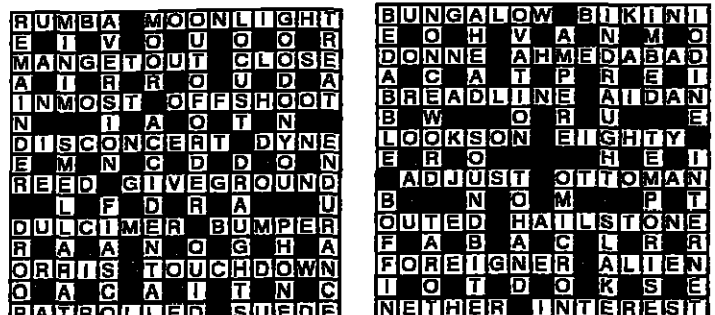
A £20 book token will be awarded to the senders of the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: The Times Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 486, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The names of the winners and the solution will be published next Saturday.

Name/Address



- ACROSS**
- TV performer in programme on plane crash (9).
 - County penitentiary's wing seized by prisoners (5).
 - Forced to part with first instalment of rent (5).
 - Steadiest, flying across the Atlantic (9).
 - Delight on account of girl (7).
 - Hold cap out, my dear fellow (3,4).
 - Trouble caused as maiden is found with Prime Minister, initially, then a ruler (8-6).
 - Sweet companion not appreciated by clown (10,4).
 - In musical, handle gentle air (4-3).
 - Put poem into new version for quick performance (2-5).
 - Appointed without any standing (9).
 - Obtain backing for Northern Irish police chief (5).
 - Hot drink barber needed before journey's end (5).
 - Water chemists here? (9).
- DOWN**
- My polite request partially granted by commuter (6,2).
 - Stars seen in Eastern country, rising (5).
 - What's a chap got inside trousers? Could be these (4,5).
 - Popular old writer with a grand manner (2,5).
 - Leaves space in restaurant (7).
 - Fraud adding a minimal sum to subscription raised (5).
 - It sounds like an opening for attack (5,4).
 - Needing a bed? Notice outside shelter (6).
 - Narrow margin of victory from leader we don't look up to? (5,4).
 - Important feat that produces character (9).
 - Like the king's wine, getting old and drunk and sleeping? (5-3).
 - Support Conservative's hidden charm (7).
 - More outspoken as game finishes prematurely (7).
 - Clear bill and leave (6).
 - Sense of duty cutting crime by a quarter (5).
 - A Chinese leader welcomed by another in Asian port (5).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,476



LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: N W Barr, Truro, Cornwall; D A Franklin, Wenham, Suffolk; D M Thomson, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire; E Cooper, Highwood Hill, London; P M Gunn, Ecclestone, Staffordshire.

AA INFORMATION

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HOURS OF DARKNESS

TODAY
Sun rises: 5:06 am
Moon sets: 8:49 pm
Moon rises: 3:11 am
Full moon May 22

London 8:49 pm to 5:05 am
Edinburgh 9:23 pm to 4:55 am
Manchester 9:05 pm to 5:04 am
Penzance 9:05 pm to 5:02 am

TOMORROW
Sun rises: 5:05 am
Moon sets: 8:50 pm
Moon rises: 3:34 am
Full moon May 22

London 8:50 pm to 5:03 am
Edinburgh 9:00 pm to 5:13 am
Manchester 9:25 pm to 4:53 am
Penzance 9:06 pm to 5:01 am

HIGH TIDES

TODAY

Location	AA	HT	PM	HT
London Bridge	10:58	6:10	22:34	5:8
Aberdeen	10:48	3:4	22:39	3:4
Avonmouth	02:55	10:0	16:36	10:2
Belfast	08:06	3:0	20:55	5:8
Cardiff	03:41	9:4	16:22	9:8
Devonport	02:16	4:6	15:03	4:6
Dover	08:24	5:3	20:54	5:6
Dublin (N Wall)	09:09	3:4	21:41	3:4
Falmouth	01:47	4:4	14:34	4:4
Glasgow	09:24	2:7	22:37	2:7
Harwich	09:06	3:2	21:25	3:1
Holyhead	07:42	4:5	20:25	4:5
Hull (Albert D)	03:26	6:9	15:40	7:1
Blackpool	02:54	7:0	15:12	7:1
King's Lynn	03:41	4:5	15:30	5:1
Leith	01:56	2:9	21:03	7:7
Liverpool	02:19	3:1	21:37	3:1
Lowestoft	07:31	2:1	18:53	2:1
Malinbeg	06:10	3:1	21:37	3:1
Milford Haven	03:13	5:3	15:50	5:3
Newquay	02:10	3:1	15:50	3:1
Penzance	01:45	2:4	12:21	4:4
Portsmouth	02:12	1:2	16:30	1:3
Portsmouth	08:40	3:6	21:14	3:9
Southampton	08:30	3:0	21:30	3:1
Swansea	02:15	2:4	15:50	2:7
Wexham-on-T	08:06	3:3	21:25	3:3

All times BST. Highs in metres.

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: Highest day temp. London Weather Centre, 24°C (75°F); lowest day temp. Fair Isle, 10°C (50°F); highest rainfall: Tring, 10mm; lowest rainfall: 0.1mm; highest sunshine: 100%; inner Hebrides, 13.5h.

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996.

FORECAST

□ General: England and Wales should have sunny spells during the morning but scattered showers will develop, becoming heavy with hail and thunder in some places. More widespread thundery showers may affect southwestern parts later. It will be warm and humid.
□ Scotland and Northern Ireland will have sunny spells. Thundery rain initially over Scotland will move north, becoming confined to the Northern Isles. Heavy, thundery showers may develop. Mostly warm, but cold in the north east.
□ London, E Midlands, W Midlands, Central N England: clear and misty start, but sunny periods will develop. Showers likely, some heavy and thundery. Wind light and variable, but gusty in showers. Very warm. Max 24°C (75°F).
□ SE England, E Anglia, Central S England, E England, Channel Isles, SW England, Wales, NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man, NE England, Borders, SW Scotland, Northern Ireland: dull start, with fog patches near coasts. Sunny periods developing, as well as heavy and thundery showers. Wind light and variable, but sea breezes forming. Very warm, but cool near coasts. Max 23°C (73°F).
□ Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, NE Scotland: thundery rain will move north leaving bright intervals, but it will be dull and foggy near coasts. Showers may develop later, some heavy. Wind strong easterly, becoming light and variable. Max 14°C (57°F).
□ Glasgow, Central Highlands, Moray Firth, Argyll, NW Scotland: thundery rain will move north, becoming brighter but showers, some heavy and thundery, are likely later. Wind fresh easterly, becoming light and variable. Cool near coasts. Max 18°C (64°F).
□ Orkney, Shetland: cloudy with outbreaks of thundery rain, perhaps becoming dry later. Wind strong easterly, easing later. Rather cold. Max 11°C (52°F).
□ Outlook: rain at times in the north and thundery showers in the south.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

24 hrs to 5 pm: b=bright; c=cloud; d=dreizzle; ds=dust storm; du=dull; f=fog; fg=fog; g=gale; h=hail; i=rain; sh=showers; s=sunny; w=wind; x=unknown; y=unknown; z=unknown.

Forecast: sun-showers; dr-bcst; sun-sun; s-r; b-bst									
	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Tynemouth	11	0.05	10	50	du		11	0.05	10
Scarborough	X						X		
Sheff	X						X		
Hull	X						X		
London	X	0.17	17	83	r		X	0.17	17
Cardiff	X	0.15	12	54	fg		X	0.15	12
Belfast	13	0.13	15	68			13	0.13	15
Edinburgh	7.7	0.22	16	61	s		7.7	0.22	16
Glasgow	X						X		
Southend	X	0.15	18	64	a		X	0.15	18
Cardiff	3.6						3.6		
Hermes Bay	0.22						0.22		
Hastings	4.1	0.10	23	73	b		4.1	0.10	23
Eastbourne	2.6						2.6		
Hove	2.3						2.3		
Liphinst	2.3						2.3		
Bognor	2.4	0.01	21	70	a		2.4	0.01	21
Southsea	1.1	0.03	20	69	r		1.1	0.03	20
Southsea	1.1	0.03	20	69	r		1.1	0.03	20
Southsea	1.1	0.03	20	69	r		1.1	0.03	20
Sandown	0.9	0.02	17	63	s		0.9	0.02	17
Shanklin	0.9	0.02	17	63	s		0.9	0.02	17
Vernon	1.8	0.01	18	54	a		1.8	0.01	18
Bournemouth	3.2	0.01	21	70	a		3.2	0.01	21
Poole	2.0	0.01	21	70	a		2.0	0.01	21
Bournemouth	3.2	0.01	21	70	a		3.2	0.01	21
Swanage	2.0	0.01	21	70	a		2.0	0.01	21
Weymouth	2.7	0.01	17	83	c		2.7	0.01	17
Weymouth	2.7	0.01	17	83	c		2.7	0.01	17
Weymouth	2.7	0.01	17	83	c		2.7	0.01	17
Torquay	3.6						3.6		
Falmouth	3.6	0.05	16	61	c		3.6	0.05	16
Falmouth	3.6						3.6		
Penzance	17						17		
Jersey	37	0.06	20	88	r		37	0.06	20
Guernsey	1.6	0.11	15	59	rs		1.6	0.11	15
St. Helier	X						X		
St. Helier	X						X		
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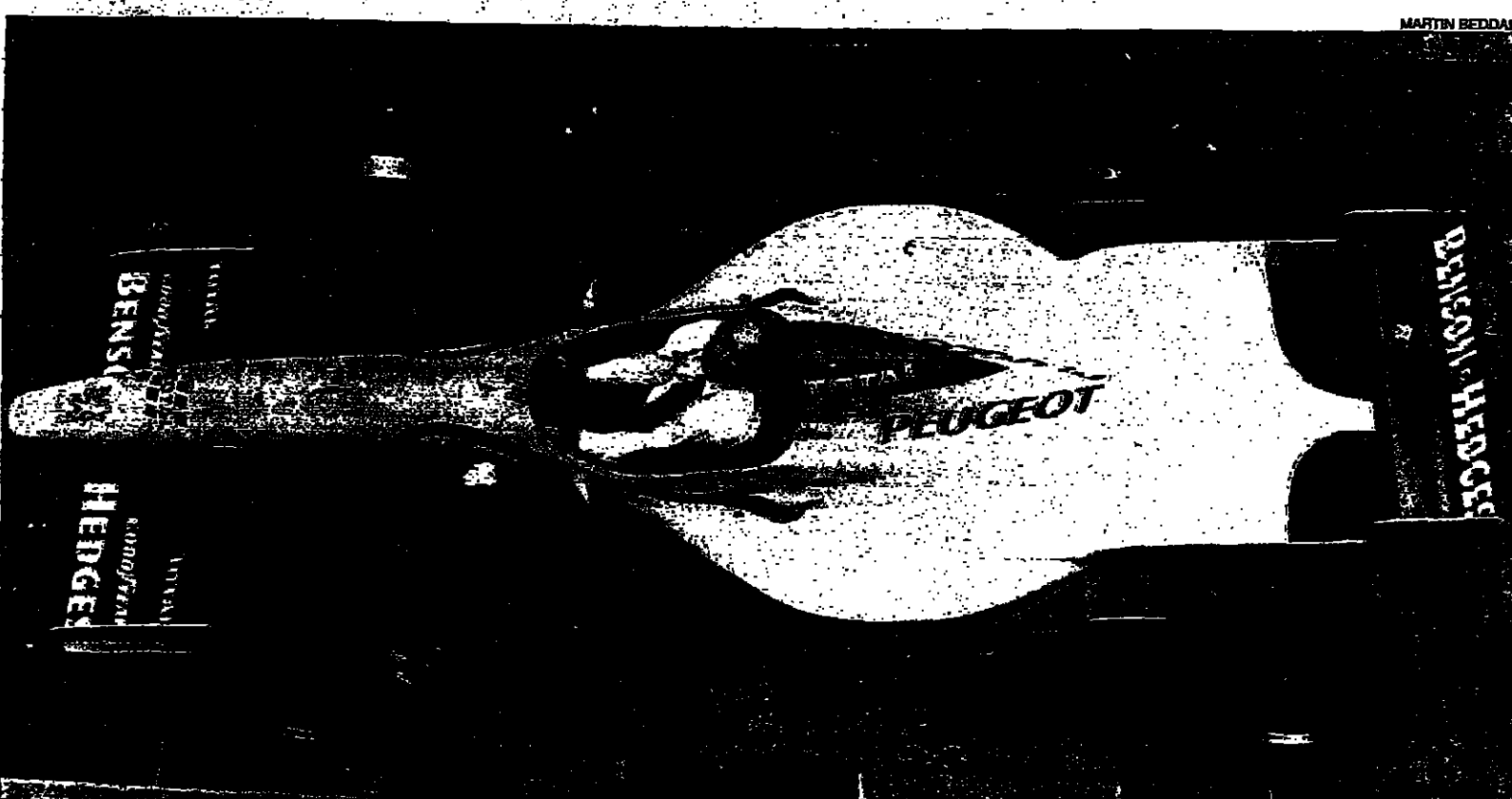
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

SATURDAY MAY 17 1997



Peter Wilson believes that Benson & Hedges will still be able to sponsor Formula One even if a proposed UK ban on tobacco advertising includes sponsorship

Gallaher chief in line for £1m

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

PETER WILSON, chairman and chief executive of Gallaher, stands to make more than £1 million if the tobacco company is taken over after its flotation on May 30.

Gallaher, which is being demerged from its US parent, American Brands, is expected to be valued at £2.2 billion.

If the company, best known for its Silk Cut and Benson & Hedges cigarettes, is taken over after the float, the directors would receive two years' salary, plus twice their last bonus and the tax value of any benefits in kind. Mr Wilson's basic salary is £485,000.

All of Gallaher's executive directors are on service contracts which, if broken by the company, would give two years' pay. The directors themselves are obliged to give only one year's notice.

These contracts are at odds with the Greenbury guidelines on executive pay. A spokesman for the company said Gallaher is for the moment retaining American practices.

The flotation prospectus, issued yesterday, said directors will be paid a discretionary annual bonus of up to half of their salary. Under a performance-based share plan, executive directors and senior staff may receive annual awards of shares or options worth up to 75 per cent of their salary.

Mr Wilson said the company intended to fight the Government's plan to ban cigarette advertising. He also said past advertising campaigns would live on in customers' minds and continue to work for the company, even if banned.

The company's strategy is to expand the business in the former Soviet Union and Asia and build up its cheaper brands in the UK.

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WEEKEND MONEY

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Windfall tax comes under fire

CONSUMER groups yesterday rounded on Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, warning that the windfall tax would result in higher bills and poorer service (Christine Buckley writes).

Bob Speares, of the Utility Buyers Forum, said: "The profits being taxed have come from the customer in the first place, by definition. Customers should not have to pay twice."

Yvonne Constance, head of the Electricity Consumers' committees, called for "cast-iron guarantees that customers won't suffer", while Jim Gardner, chairman of the Ofwat consumer council, said the tax could unfairly penalise customers rather than the companies and shareholders "who, since privatisation, have enjoyed a very good return on their investments".

The Treasury remains confident the windfall tax cannot be challenged in British law courts and that representations to the European Commission would fail. Graham Searjeant, page 31.

Post Office to win freedom to compete

By PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

THE Government is to give the Post Office the increased commercial freedom it wants to fend off ever-growing competition.

An immediate review of the options for the Post Office's future was announced by the Government yesterday. Although privatisation has been effectively vetoed, radical moves under consideration are likely to include allowing the Post Office to raise expansion funds and engage in joint ventures. The programme of closing down Crown post offices has been suspended.

Senior Post Office managers and the postal unions gave an enthusiastic reception to news of the review, which had been foreshadowed in Labour's pre-election manifesto.

Government ministers and Whitehall expect to open talks with the Post Office on how best to give it greater commercial freedom, which Post Office managers insist they need to combat the twin threats of competition from foreign rivals and from technologies such as fax and e-mail.

The Post Office is considered a British success story but it has felt hampered in its efforts to compete. The Conservative Government had considered privatisation as a solution to the problem but abandoned the plan in the face of opposition from its backbenchers, who feared the measure would put at risk the network of rural post offices.

Mr McCartney, Minister of State at the Department of Trade and Industry, announced the latest move after writing to Sir Michael Heron, Post Office chairman, stating that as a "high priority" the Government wants to open talks with the Post Office to review policy and discuss how best to give the Post Office the greater commercial freedom it seeks. Sir Michael welcomed the move.

Mr McCartney said yesterday that for too long, the Post Office had been held back from developing its full potential. It had, he said, been forced to stand by while foreign competitors, such as the privatised Dutch post office, had been allowed to "forge ahead". He added: "We now intend to remove unnecessary and damaging shackles, whilst ensuring that competition between the Post Office and the private sector takes place on a fair and transparent basis."

The Government is likely to reject any full or partial privatisation of the Post Office and ministers are expected to be against selling some of its constituent businesses, such as Parcelforce, the parcels delivery service, or substantial stakes in the business. The talks with the Post Office, postal unions and user groups will aim to find ways of giving the Post Office the opportunity it wants to agree joint ventures, for which the Treasury has previously refused permission. Ministers are likely to favour plans to constitute the

Post Office as a public corporation, along the lines of detailed proposals put forward by Bill Robinson, the former Treasury adviser. These would give the Post Office freedom but still maintain its positive cashflow to the Treasury.

The Post Office deals with 17.5 billion letters a year, producing a turnover of £4 billion in 1996. Parcelforce, hit by intense competition, just broke even on a turnover of £470 million last year.

The Post Office was concerned, however, about the Government's suspension of its programme to convert Crown post offices to agency status.

But leaders of the Communication Workers' Union, whose annual conference opens tomorrow in Jersey, were delighted. Derek Hodgson, acting joint general secretary, said: "It is marvellous news for local communities, customers, postal workers and for the union."

BUSINESS TODAY

FTSE 100	4683.5	(+12.7)
Yield	3.47%	
FTSE All share	2230.98	(+4.28)
Nikkei	20294.73	(+338.42)
Dow Jones	7232.98	(-39.58)
S&P Composite	833.73	(-3.15)
Federal Funds	5.50%	(5.50%)
Long Bond	6.89%	(6.89%)
Yield	6.89%	(6.89%)
3-month Interbank	6.75%	(6.75%)
3-month bill	11.5%	(11.5%)
3-month bill	11.5%	(11.5%)

New York	1.8375	(1.8433)
London	1.6375	(1.6404)
DM	2.7750	(2.7850)
FF	0.3444	(0.3540)
SF	2.2241	(2.2328)
Yen	102.84	(102.64)
£ Index	96.5	(96.0)

London	1.8920	(1.8980)
DM	5.7500	(5.7125)
FF	1.4125	(1.4225)
SF	115.39	(115.30)
Yen	101.9	(102.9)
£ Index	101.9	(102.9)

Tokyo close Yen	116.45	
Brent 15-day (Aug)	\$19.70	(+0.04)
London Fuel	\$344.75	(+34.85)
London Gas	\$344.75	(+34.85)

SIB poised to be Lloyd's regulator

By JON ASHWORTH

THE Securities and Investments Board (SIB), the main City regulator, is set to take over the regulation of Lloyd's of London, under a bold series of proposals published yesterday.

A leaner Lloyd's rulebook and more power for the Department of Trade and Industry are among the proposals that flow from an internal Lloyd's review. Lloyd's names welcomed the proposed changes, which will increase accountability at Lime Street, and limit the scope for market abuse.

The review promises an early challenge for Sir David Simon, the former BP chairman, who takes over Lloyd's issues at the DTI. The DTI independently assesses the

market's solvency, and is set to see its powers extended.

Sir Alan Hardcastle, chairman of the Lloyd's regulatory board, said the SIB is "the most obvious candidate" to take on external regulation with the DTI, and with day-to-day market regulation remaining with the Lloyd's council.

Other proposals include reducing the size of the regulatory board, cutting "red tape" and compliance costs, streamlining the rule book, and recovering regulatory costs on a "user pays" basis, rather than wholly from members' subscriptions. A specialist financial assessment unit would be set up to detect and monitor risk in the market.

Co-op Congress to consider merger

By JASON NISSE

A MOTION to force the various parts of the co-operative movement to merge into a £6 billion retail giant is to be put before the Co-operative Congress, the annual meeting of the movement, in Cardiff next weekend.

A proposal to bring together the two largest parts of the movement — the Co-operative Wholesale Society and Co-operative Retail Services — was rejected by CRS last month.

The idea resurfaced as CWS mounted its successful defence to the proposed £1.2 billion bid from Galileo, the vehicle of 31-year-old entrepreneur Andrew Regan.

The Scottish branch of the

CWS has put a motion to the congress calling on the main groups to "put aside their petty differences and enact a plan to see the emergence of a unified Co-operative Movement in the near future".

Unification would not only bring together the CWS and CRS but also United Norwest, the largest independent co-op. Harry Moore, chief executive of the CRS, rejected moves to merge with the CWS, saying it was a "management distraction".

Motions approved by the Co-operative Congress are binding on the executive of the movement, which includes two representatives from CRS and one from United Norwest.

Door-to-door lenders feel pinch

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

WORRIED investors knocked more than £250 million off the value of financial stocks yesterday amid fears of a Government clampdown on exploitative lending to poor people.

The fall came after a warning in The Times yesterday by Nigel Griffiths, Minister for Consumer Affairs, that high-charging mortgage lenders and home credit companies were under review.

Shares in Provident Financial, the largest door-to-door lender of small loans, slumped 52 p.p. to 532 p.p. in early

trading, before closing at 593 p.p. Other weekly credit collectors suffered. Cattles fell 25 p.p. to 313 p.p., S&U 26 p.p. to 343 p.p., and London Scottish Bank 4 p.p. to 100 p.p.

While lenders such as City Mortgage Corporation have come under Office of Fair Trading scrutiny, the country's £200 home credit companies have so far escaped attention, although they charge APR (annual percentage rate) of between 100 and 500 per cent on their loans.

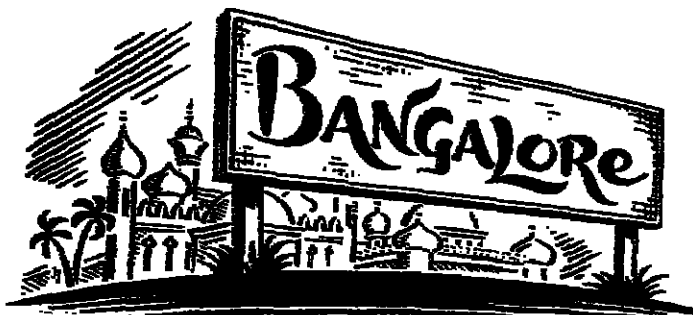
Edward Cran, chief executive of Castles, said 52 per cent of adults could only get loans from home credit companies. Most Labour politicians have used the

facilities of home credit companies in the past," he said.

Ruth Evans, director of the National Consumer Council, called for the creation of more credit unions. She urged the Government and local authorities to consider underwriting low-cost loans, but she cautioned that capping rates could create a black market.

Elaine Kempson, of the Policy Studies Institute, called for supermarkets and the Post Office to offer subsidised loans based on social security payments.

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The locals know it as Surf City.

With the remarkable expansion of the Internet, "surfing" is set to become a major leisure pastime throughout the world. And it is countries like India which are making the most of this new international market. One of its fastest growing industries is software programming. Because Martin Currie has been investing in India for many years, this success story comes as little surprise to us. In fact, our long-established expertise in international investment helps us to ride the wave of new technologies.



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A WORKING WEEK FOR: TONY GREENER

Yachtsman who steered a course of genius

Jason Nissé on the man who will head the newly merged Guinness and GrandMet and the deals conducted behind the scenes

Monday LAST Saturday morning, Tony Greener was feeling relieved. The Guinness chairman was holed up in the central London offices of SJ Berwin, the solicitor, with about 60 lawyers, accountants, bankers and drinks industry executives hammering out the details of the £23 billion merger with Grand Metropolitan. The deal, which had been under discussion since George Bull, GrandMet chairman, proposed it over the filet mignon at Dukes Hotel in St James's Place on April 10, was to be announced two days later. Miraculously, the market had not had a sniff of the news. "Getting through to Friday evening without anything blowing up in the market was crucial," Greener recalls, leaning back at the broad table in his office overlooking Portman Square, central London, kicking off a shoe and exposing a sock with a hole in it. "If no one had guessed by Friday, we felt it would stay quiet until Monday."

Most of the senior staff at Guinness were not told until after 8pm on Friday night. Lawyers from the five UK and US law firms, bankers from Lazard Brothers and SBC Warburg, stockbrokers from Cazenove and accountants from KPMG and Price Waterhouse, were all called and asked to turn up at SJ Berwin on Saturday morning for 48 hours of intensive work. A team of 15 secretaries worked in 12-hour shifts, taking notes, typing and photocopying documents.

Even over the final weekend, no one twinged, despite Berwin's offices being in the old home of *The Times* in Gray's Inn Road, next door to a building housing ITN, Reuters, *The European* and the London office of *The Scotsman*. "We pulled the blinds down on that side of the building," Greener says. The weekend was the culmination of a month of exploratory talks and, in the final fortnight, detailed discussions, to bring about a deal that Greener says everyone in both companies had known for about three years had to be done. Both GrandMet and Guinness had looked at bidding for the other company, as well as possibly snapping up smaller fish in the industry, such as Allied Domecq. To the great embarrassment of Guinness, a briefing paper from its merchant bank, Lazard Brothers, exploring the possibility of a £13.2 billion aggressive bid for GrandMet had leaked last summer.

Greener, a tall, distant 56-year-old who has not commanded a great deal of affection in the City, was forced into stating that Guinness was not going to make a hostile bid for GrandMet. "We had run the numbers on a number of companies, and one had got into the public domain," he admits. "And a reasonable betting man would guess that

GrandMet had done the same. But a hostile bid by one company for another could not be justified.

"What that document showed was that a bid would see a destruction of shareholder value to the tune of £2.5 billion. The premium that we would have had to pay to get GrandMet shareholders to accept would not have been a good idea for our shareholders."

The dinner with George Bull had been in the two chairmen's diaries for months. They had known each other for 17 years and met regularly to gossip about the drinks business. "It's a good idea to every so often keep in touch with colleagues from the industry," Greener says. The issue of merger was raised by Bull during the main course. He knew there would be an enthusiastic response.

Greener had a business trip to Africa planned — visiting six Guinness operations from Cape Town, South Africa, to Lagos, Nigeria, in seven days — and knew suspicions would be aroused if he cancelled. Unkind wags have speculated that Greener went on holiday, but he is not one for exotic trips, preferring to spend his time sailing, once completing the Sydney to Hobart yacht race, or skiing. "I haven't had much time for either recently," he says sternly.

Greener told Bull that Guinness would ask Angela Morgan at Theodore Goddard, the City lawyer, and Marcus Agius, a director of Lazard Brothers, to look into whether a deal could win approval, both from the competition authorities and the City. "I told George that if the results were positive I would talk to my board and let him know," says Greener. At this point the only Guinness director brought into the information loop was Philip Yea, the finance director.

Greener returned from Africa on Saturday, April 26. The next morning he met with Yea, Agius and Morgan, who told him that the deal could be done. He then set about phoning the members of the Guinness board to get approval to enter detailed discussions with GrandMet. He was given unanimous backing. This included the approval of Bernard Arnault, a Guinness non-executive and chairman of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the French luxury goods group, which holds 14.2 per cent of Guinness. When the full merger proposals later came to be agreed by Guinness's board, Arnault opposed them, instead suggesting a merger of LVMH's wine and spirits business with Guinness's. Greener is at pains not to irritate Arnault further by suggesting that he made a U-turn, first agreeing to and then opposing the deal. "We got the approval from the board to explore the idea," Greener says. "This was not an agreement to proceed or to any particular structure."

By Sunday evening, Greener was able to phone George Bull and tell him that he had been given the green light to see if a



The merger of the drinks groups may have taken the City by surprise but, as Tony Greener noted, the plan was conceived more than a year ago

deal could be done. This meant that the real work was about to start — 12 days of intense negotiations shrouded in complete secrecy with the aim of putting full merger details to the boards of the two companies on Friday, May 9.

A core of four from Guinness and GrandMet came together to hammer out the deal — Greener and Yea from Guinness, Bull and John McGrath, chief executive of GrandMet from their side. The key to the success of the deal was hammering out the main points speedily and in secret.

Any sniff of the deal in the markets could dramatically move the share prices and spoil the idea that the two companies — which have a similar level of profits and market capitalisation — were coming together as equals.

A top management structure was worked out quite quickly. Bull had already said he was going to retire in July next year, when he is 62, so this would allow Greener to become chairman of the combined group with the two sharing the job until Bull's retirement.

Most of the other board jobs dovetailed, though Finn Johnsson, the head of United Distillers, had to accept the number two post in the combined drinks business

under Jack Keenan from GrandMet, while Gerald Corbett, GrandMet's finance director, is having to leave because, as Greener puts it, "there is no room for two finance directors". Asked about how Corbett was told that he would not be needed in the combined company, Greener becomes reticent.

"George has not discussed this," a public relations minder pipes up. "Well, I had better not discuss it either," says Greener. It was clearly a difficult incident in the midst of negotiations that Greener says went "without a cross word". "There were no stand-offs, no one

said 'this is a deal breaker'. On every single occasion we were able to deal with problems that came up," he emphasises.

The name of the new company was low on the priority list, as demonstrated by the decision to use the rather bland GVG Brands. Greener says they considered GGM but this reminded people too much of horses.

Of course, there are many issues outstanding, such as which head office the new group will use and where the 2,000 job cuts, which will bring the estimated £175 million of savings, will fall. Greener says these are details that can be thrashed out in the six months or so that it will take the various regulators — particularly the European Commission and the US anti-trust

authority — to approve the merger. For Greener the deal is the culmination of a career that has taken him from his family's cotton mill to Dunhill, where he turned the cigarette maker into an international branded goods company, to his recent years at Guinness, keeping the profits up against a background of a declining market for spirits in the US and western Europe.

He is not saying how long he will stay before he retires, but it is clear that he will oversee the company through the three years that he feels it will take for the full merger benefits to come through. "It's for the non-executives to decide when I go," he smiles. "But I want to do a lot more sailing and skiing. I won't be around for ever."

Longest day

MALCOLM BATES, chairman of Pearl Assurance, had a date with the Treasury on Wednesday, we now know. He arrived, having taken the precaution of stuffing a copy of the Personal Investment Authority's code of conduct down the back of his pinstriped trousers, to be carpeted by Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, for Pearl's leading role in pensions mis-selling.

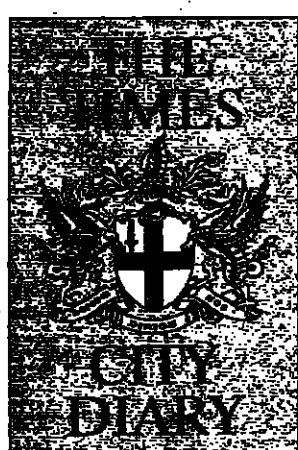
Less well known is another meeting at the Treasury, 24 hours later. Geoffrey Robinson, Paymaster General, was discussing the Government's revamped Private Finance Initiative with the man hand-picked from the world of business to conduct a thorough review of the PFI. He is, of course, Malcolm Bates, chairman of the engineer Premier Farnell and a former deputy managing director at GEC, as well as being something in insurance, believe. And they say a week is a long time in politics. Bates, peering in from the outside, and not happy about it, is Alastair Ross Goobey, chief executive of the Hermes fund and the nearest equivalent to PFI maestro under the Tories. The gossip has it that Ross

Goobey was sacked because he was a Tory — as if Bates had survived all those years under Arnie Weinstock as some sort of closet leftie. The truth is more poignant. Ross Goobey, sensing the political wind, had been working to build PFI bridges with a potential new Labour administration. Trouble was, the new Labourite he had access to was Mike O'Brien, shadow City spokesman, who, come the election, ended up at the Home Office.

● A GUIDE to Britain's Best Employers appears from the Corporate Research Foundation. A thousand companies were screened and the best hundred to work for singled out in terms of respect for their staff and all-round soundness. Precious few City brokers and banks in there, saving Charterhouse, which one does tend to think of as a happy ship since the chief mate left. The only real big hitter to feature is Goldman Sachs. Goldman Sachs of the 15-hour days, of the broken marriages, of the weekends are-for-wimps? Or is that Goldman Sachs that makes a few dozen of its staff millionaires every year? Truly, the path to happiness takes many directions.

Dream on

MARTIN SORRELL, Naplesesque boss of the WPP advertising combine, gave the latest Stockton lecture at the London Business School on Thursday night. He told assembled business people, including David Sainsbury and Derek Lewis, of research that showed that after just five minutes of any such lecture, the audience's attention tends to wander. Rather than listening to the speaker, they indulge in wild sexual fantasies, the research proves. Mr



Sorrell spoke for 50 minutes, to allow his audience's imagination full flight. Derek Lewis, the former head of prisons, left well before the dinner. So no one managed to ask him whether the subject of Arm Whitcombe had earlier flitted across his mind.

Man of straw

JACK STRAW, our tough new Home Secretary, is to crack down on those pernicious alcopops, after surveys showing that more than half the nation's teenagers drink the stuff. But I suspect the producers have little to fear.

It appears that responsibility for alcopops falls between various Government departments including the Home Office, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture. Why does one suspect Mr Straw is about to learn his first lesson in ministerial impotence?

● Leafing ostentatiously through this week's copy of *New Statesman* — we political turncoats need all the credibility we can get — I note that the *Stargazers* drift to the sensible centre is proceeding apace. There is even an intelligent think-piece from Simon Heffer on whether the Conservatives. But what is this? Celebrate the general election victory with a £30 saving on an annual subscription to the

New Statesman, it says, "and receive the new biography of Che Guevara — priced at £25 — free. Come, come, does not one there know the new Labour refrain: 'The people's flag is deeply shired? Che was God. Now he's dead.'"

Book of years

THE fight for publishing rights to one of the most eagerly awaited political memoirs has been won. Hodder Headline will produce the first autobiography by Sir Edward Heath. The book, as yet untitled, is not out until October next year, by which time Sir Edward will be 82. "It will be a very readable way of putting the whole of the post-War era in context," says Tim Hely Hutchinson, Hodder's chief executive. The former Prime Minister, whose previous publishing efforts were about sailing and music, has been working on the manuscript for many years.

It will, I am told, mention Baroness Thatcher, a subject rarely far from Sir Edward's thoughts since he was ousted by the Iron Lady, and "punches won't necessarily be pulled," says Hely Hutchinson. "But I think it will be balanced." There's a first time for anything, I suppose.

MARTIN WALLER



Hodder Headline has won the rights to Sir Edward Heath's autobiography

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TORTOISE



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Burdened by bonus regulations

Widows and other relatives of deceased building society members are still facing difficulties staking a claim to bonus payouts, even though their right to receive these windfalls is enshrined in law.

Each society has its own complex rules for successor accounts and even if you know what to do, following the procedures can be difficult when you have just been bereaved.

As an example, the following briefly covers how the Halifax treats successors.

If a member dies before conversion day, his or her entitlement to free shares is normally lost because membership, one of the conditions for being eligible to receive free shares ends on death. However, special terms apply if the death of a member was notified to the Halifax before November 25, 1994 or between midnight on November 25, 1994 and midnight on the day before conversion.

If the qualifying successor was a two-year investing member on the qualifying date, then he or she will be entitled to receive the basic distribution and any variable distribution that the deceased

Lizanne Rose
on problems
of obtaining
windfalls due
to the deceased



Wrongly advised

Penelope McWatters, 56, of Oxted, Wiltshire, Merseyside, feels dismayed at her treatment by the Halifax. After her husband's death in April 1995, she was advised by her lawyer to check on her right to his Halifax shares. But her local branch told her the share entitlement lapsed on her husband's death. She was advised to transfer his £14,000 savings into her own Halifax account.

her local branch to obtain confirmation that she would receive her entitlement but to date without success.

In spite of having been promised that she would receive exact details of her share allocation by the end of April, she is still waiting. She said: "The Halifax has a moral duty to those who had been wrongly advised. I was told to transfer Keith's money to my account rather than open an executor account."

"It should have been easy for the Halifax to resolve this situation. There isn't even a question mark over my rights."

would have received. If the qualifying successor is not a two-year investing member, then he or she will be entitled to receive only one basic distribution.

If the first-named joint holder of one or more share accounts and/or PIBS dies, and the death was notified to the Halifax before midnight on the day before conversion day, the qualifying successor will be the second-named joint holder who becomes the sole or first named joint holder of all share accounts or PIBS.

A qualifying successor of a deceased borrowing member is entitled to receive the basic distribution only once as a borrowing member and/or as a qualifying successor, irrespective of the number of times he or she qualifies.

Society acts to deter carpet-baggers

The Birmingham Midshires Building Society this week moved to stop "carpet-baggers" from opening accounts to benefit from any windfall bonus. The Midlands-based society increased the opening balance for its new savings accounts from £1,000 to £2,500.

The society said it had been forced to make this move because of the large numbers of speculative accounts being opened. The high level of activity meant that the 115-branch building society no longer felt that it could give its customers adequate service levels.

The society pointed out that about a third of the 100,000 accounts opened so far this year had been opened on a speculative basis. Birmingham Midshires has been one of those most badly tipped to demutualise, and thus provide a windfall bonus.

Speculative activity has almost certainly increased this year because billions of pounds are being freed up with the flotations of the Alliance &

Leicester, Halifax, Woolwich and Northern Rock. The minimum amount of money needed to open an account carrying membership rights varies among the remaining societies.

Two of the die-hard mutuals, the Nationwide and the Bradford & Bingley, will only require £500 to open an account. The Chelsea, Norwich & Peterborough and now the Birmingham Midshires require £2,500, while the Yorkshire and the Leeds & Holbeck require £1,000. First National, an Irish Republic building society, also appears poised to demutualise. Savers in this country must open an account in Dublin to be given the opportunity of participating in any share bonanza. The minimum amount needed to open an account is £2,000.

With only 16 days to go before the flotation of the Halifax, the UK's biggest building society, with a market capitalisation of more than £10 billion, stockbrokers are beginning to gear themselves up for the first few days of

trading, when buying and selling of shares is likely to be at its heaviest. Analysts believe the Halifax share price will open far above the price of 432p estimated by its advisers in the transfer document published earlier this year.

The Alliance & Leicester is now trading at around 609p a share - 40 per cent higher than the price predicted by its advisers last October. The price rocketed on the back of institutions, such as Mercury, buying, and on the back of bid speculation.

Although the Halifax is too big to be a bid target, institutions will still need to buy the shares. Barclays Stockbrokers is offering a pre-registration facility for those who want to buy more shares on the first day of the Halifax float. Barclays charges 1 per cent, with a minimum of £10 for purchase of shares. NatWest's free 32-page guide to the windfall shares can be obtained by ringing 0800 200 400.

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MISERY LOANS 42

The repayments
that leapt £250
if a day late

WEEKEND
MONEY

CROSS LINE 37

Windfall tax
gets BT in
a tangle



THE TIMES PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Lawyers cast doubt
on compensation

Solicitors acting for up to 600 victims of the personal pensions mis-selling scandal have written to Helen Liddell, the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, demanding that she put pressure on pension companies to pay for compensation offers to be independently checked.

The letter, from Ringrose Wharton, a Bristol solicitor, follows an out-of-court settlement this week in which a victim's original offer of compensation of £6,000 was increased to £20,500. Many more victims could be in a similar position but are reluctant to challenge big insurance companies or face large legal bills.

Robert Wharton, partner in Ringrose Wharton, said: "People should have the right to have their offer checked either by an independent financial adviser or an actuary and paid for either by the provider or the Government."

Regulators admitted this week that more than 500,000 of an estimated 570,000 priority cases are still waiting to be compensated for being wrongly advised to transfer funds from generous company pension schemes to more risky personal pensions, three and a half years after the full extent of the scandal was revealed.

The Personal Investment Authority (PIA), which is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the mis-selling review, said only just over 50,000 cases had been reviewed. Of these, only 12,650 have accepted compensation payments, worth £102 million. This is an average of £8,000 per person.

Fears are growing that some of these people could have accepted offers far below what

Sara McConnell says pension
mis-selling deals may fall short

they should have received. Under PIA guidelines, investors have the right to look at the calculations on which their compensation offer is based. But Weekend Money readers who have exercised this right have found the figures incomprehensible and claim they are misleading.

Richard Glasspool, a Herefordshire teacher, whose case was covered in Weekend Money in February, argues that the calculations produced by the firm that sold him a personal pension do not take account of valuable benefits he would have received from his teacher's scheme. The firm claimed it was using PIA guidelines.

The PIA said the calculations were "not designed to be user friendly"; it argued that ideally customers would not need to see the figures because they should have confidence in the PIA's own checks. PIA actuaries are meant to double check compensation offers to confirm its guidelines have been followed.

There is growing concern that many victims have not even started to have their cases assessed because they are failing to respond to requests for more information from firms.

The Securities and Investments Board (SIB), the chief City watchdog, is planning to target such investors in a desperate bid to persuade more

people to respond. SIB confessed this week that two out of five investors were failing to fill in questionnaires sent by pension providers. The questionnaires were introduced last November in a bid to speed up compensation payments. A new set will be sent out in the next few weeks. If investors fail to reply after two reminders, their case will not be included within the review, however urgent it is.

These new initiatives are part of another burst of determination by regulators to resolve the scandal. The PIA has finally named the 25 worst offenders, including Legal & General, Prudential and Pearl, and set them individual targets for clearing up all their outstanding cases. The final date is December 1998.

Regulators are keen to see as many people as possible reinstated in their employer's scheme with insurance companies paying compensation for past missed benefits. But SIB has now firm up guidelines for insurance companies to offer legally binding guarantees to those whose employers will not reinstate them.

But guarantees have been criticised for letting insurers off the hook by allowing them time to top up personal pensions, rather than having to write an immediate cheque for compensation.

PEP
TOP FACTS

Before accepting your compensation offer, Ringrose Wharton recommends that you investigate the following:

■ Can I be fully reinstated into my old scheme, being treated as if I had never left? You should insist on reinstatement, whenever possible.

■ Are all benefits reinstated, including death-in-service, retirement through injury, spouse benefit, life cover, etc?

■ Will I be repaid any excess contributions that I have been making into my personal pension? Will interest be added? What is my position over Serps payments?

■ If you are being offered a top-up of your personal pension, instead of reinstatement, ask why.

Is the compensation adequate and calculated on the SIB/PIA assumption? Find out if the value of the top-up replaces all lost pension scheme benefits.

■ Will the pension company pay to have the offer checked by an independent financial adviser or independent actuary?

For a free copy of the SIB leaflet, Putting Things Right - The Review of Personal Pensions, ring 0171-628 1240.

WEEKEND MONEY
is edited by Anne Ashworth

Higher offer includes gagging clause

Hundreds of victims of pension mis-selling are seeking redress through the courts rather than wait for the outcome of the pensions review. Two of them tell their stories (Sara McConnell writes).

Tony Nuttall left his job as a lighting director at Border Television at the end of 1990. In September 1991, he transferred his £33,000 pension fund to Barclays Life. Just three months after the transfer, he checked the value of his fund in the press and found it was worth only £30,000. Barclays admitted that it had advised him wrongly to transfer. Three years later, Barclays offered £6,500 compensation. Mr Nuttall rejected this offer as derisory and complained to the Personal Investment Authority and the Securities and Investments Board. He was

not satisfied with the response from either regulator and contacted Ringrose Wharton, a Bristol solicitor, which is acting for hundreds of pensions mis-selling victims.

Two months later Barclays raised its offer of compensation to £20,500 after the losses were recalculated independently. But the higher offer came on condition that he agreed to a gagging clause. This, coupled with further independent calculations claiming the loss could be as much as £48,000, spurred him into continuing his litigation.

But this week, advised that he only had a 50:50 chance of winning more money, he accepted the £20,500 and £750 costs. He said: "I agreed not to continue because I didn't want to have to pay costs if I lost. I would have risked the house and I've got a family."

It is three years since Tracy Glesier, 35, a nurse, contacted Weekend Money in her search for compensation from the Prudential. It had advised her to transfer from her generous National Health Service scheme to a personal pension.

The NHS has since reinstated her in its scheme but she wants the Pru to compensate her for three years' lost benefits. She abandoned the industry's own review process believing her case would be resolved more quickly in court. "I'll be of pensionable age by the time they sort that [the pensions review] out," she has received full support from the Royal College of Nursing, which is helping hundreds of its members in legal actions. The union is paying her costs. Her case comes to court in June for pre-trial review.



Glesier: now reinstated

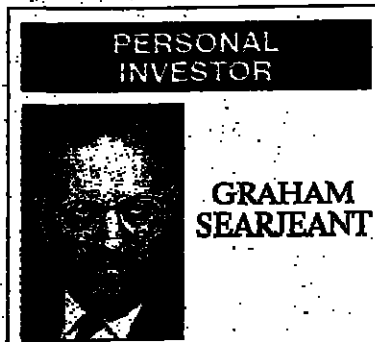
No windfalls to tax at BT

Times change. Generations of schoolchildren and college students were told that the will of the people on tax matters, as represented by their MPs, was paramount, so long as it was expressed clearly and unequivocally in an Act of Parliament. No more. The Treaty of Rome and subsequent European Union laws rank higher. So, informally, do judgments on the European Convention on Human Rights. Even so, the chances of a successful legal challenge to what was billed as a windfall tax on excess profits of regulated privatised monopoly utilities seem slim, given that such a tax has the people's recent, overwhelming mandate.

Some of us have never suggested that such windfalls should be immune from tax. Far from it. In 1995, when the 12 regional electricity companies started paying out billions in surplus capital not thought to exist at the 1990 privatisation, they stood up and invited a tax.

When some, but not all, of the ten water companies followed suit under pressure from City shareholders, they too exposed financial windfalls that the Treasury, the City and their regulator had not originally allowed for. National Power and Powergen, the two big privatised power generating companies, did likewise, though they could argue that they were genuinely returning capital to shareholders because they had been forced to shed part of their previously dominant shares of the power market.

Taking windfalls to shareholders of privatised utilities is as legitimate as it was in 1981 to tax interest rate windfalls to big clearing banks. In detail, all such



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

taxes are inequitable between past and present shareholders. But if one-off taxes need to be raised, there is a case for taxing the ongoing company that represents shareholders as a whole.

Taxing windfalls, or excess profits, presupposes, however, that those taxed have enjoyed a windfall, or have gained some benefit from excess profits. British Telecom has caused something of a stink by suggesting that it would challenge a windfall tax in Gordon Brown's first Budget. Critics scoff that BT earns £100 a second, without posting what a reasonable profit per second might be. Sir Iain Vallance, BT's chairman, is right to challenge any windfall tax on his shareholders.

All two million of us must surely be wondering how we missed this windfall that Mr Brown proposes to tax. Since the initial sale of 51 per cent in 1984 to date, BT shares have delivered to shareholders a lower capital return than the market average. Normal dividends

have not been conspicuously above average. Special dividend handouts have been noticeable only by their absence.

True, BT shares had an initial boost, partly because they only had to be paid for in instalments. Thereafter, they more or less followed the market average until 1994, when competition and regulation got tougher and returns fell well below average. A further quarter of BT shares were sold by the Treasury at the end of 1991, earning average returns for about 18 months and lousy returns thereafter. The last quarter were sold in 1993, giving buyers a miserable time.

No windfall, but surely there have been excess profits. Comparisons show BT's profit margins and returns being higher than at many foreign telephone utilities, particularly in America, where regulation underwrites high costs. If excess profits have been earned, however, where have they gone? Certainly not to shareholders. Clearly, any benefit of excess profits was factored fully into the sale prices. Any excess profits have already gone to the Treasury.

With luck, the Government will fulfil its election promise and tax only windfalls. If it does so, BT, along with the relics of British Gas and others, will have nothing to fear. If a tax is levied crudely on the profits or turnover of privatised utilities, then BT as the biggest will inevitably pay most. But that would not be a legitimate tax. It would be reparations levied by a conqueror on old Labour's oldest symbolic enemy. That would deserve to be challenged, whatever the outcome.

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Karen Zagor explains why mortgage lenders want a change from APR

'Meaningless and misleading'

A QUESTION OF MONEY

At a time when Nigel Griffiths, Minister for Consumer Affairs, has warned lenders against charging vulnerable borrowers exorbitant rates and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, has passed the power of making interest rate decisions to the Bank of England, consumers would do well to turn their attention to interest rates. Bank of England officials made it clear that rates might have to rise again to keep inflation in check. Last week the base rate was raised one quarter of a point to 6.25 per cent, a move followed by home-loan rises.

Q What is an annual percentage rate (APR)?

A An APR is the yardstick used to compare borrowing. It is a single figure representing the annual cost of a loan when interest and all fees are taken into consideration. It was introduced in the Consumer Credit Act of 1974 to help consumers to understand the true cost of borrowing.



Many characters in Radio Four's *The Archers*, including Phil and Jill are currently fretting over rising interest rates

Q So why is an APR so important?

A In theory, the APR provides an accurate way of comparing loans. The higher the APR, the more the consumer pays, so if you know the APR on a credit card or a mortgage, you should be able to tell whether you are being

offered a good deal. When deciding on a loan, the APR should provide enough information to allow you to decide whether to take out a personal loan, extend your overdraft facility or run up your credit card.

Q Is the APR an accurate measure?

A No, says Michael Coogan, an, director-general of the Council of Mortgage Lenders. He has said the APR is meaningless and potentially misleading and warns consumers not to use the APR to compare home loan costs.

Q Why is the APR misleading such bad press?

A The problem is that the rules for calculating an APR are hopelessly confusing. The situation is worst for mortgage lenders. It is a relatively straightforward business to compare APRs on standard variable rate mortgages. But the situation is complicated for fixed and discounted mortgages, which ac-

count for 75 per cent of the total. Most mortgages run for about 25 years, but the discount or fixed-rate period is only a fraction of that time, after which most revert to the current variable rate. If a lender takes the discounted rate and applies it to the life of the loan, the APR will be unrealistically low. But lenders cannot predict, with any certainty, where interest rates will be when the mortgage discount expires.

After a ruling against the Scarborough Building Society, which advertised an APR of 1.1 per cent for a discounted mortgage, most lenders are now calculating APRs by applying the standard rate after the end of the discount period. But some lenders are still going by an earlier court ruling, which appears to contradict the Scarborough ruling.

Q So what can be done about the APR?

A The new Government has promised to address the problem, and it is hoped that new legislation from Europe will lead to more uniform ways of measuring borrowing costs throughout the EU.

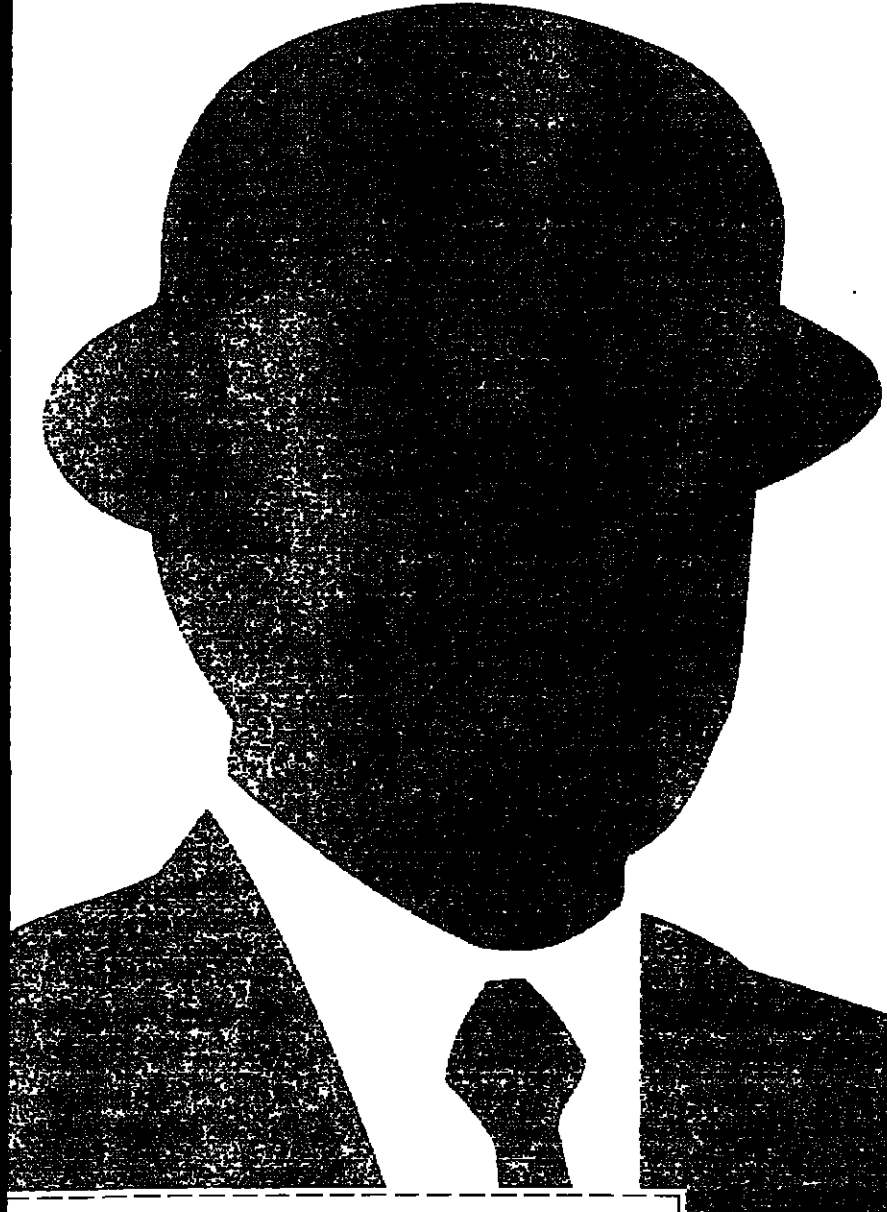
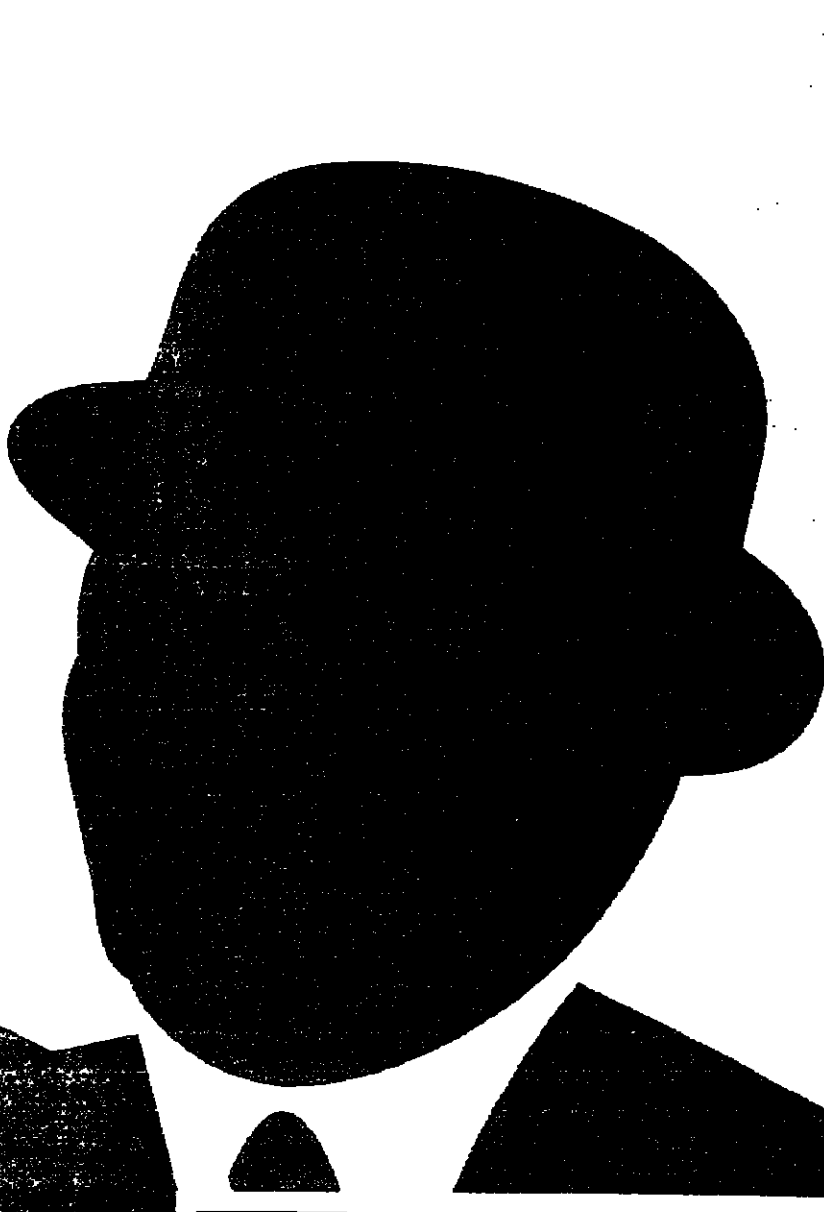
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Step lightly if Pepping A&L shares

The seemingly unstoppable rise in Alliance & Leicester shares means that its shareholders need to take great care, but act with haste, when applying to transfer their shares into the tax-free shelter of a personal equity plan (Pep). Mistakes will delay the application and could jeopardise the rare opportunity for a free transfer of shares into a Pep on top of the £9,000 pa Pep allowance. For a successful transfer to take place your Pep manager needs three things from you: ■ The share certificate. ■ A completed Crest transfer form – this should be on the back of the certificate, so remember to turn it over. Section 1 asks you to write down in words the number of shares you have (the number is on the certificate). Section 2 is for your name, section 3 needs your signature – don't put your signature on the change of address section at the bottom of the form unless you have actually supplied details of a new address. The box under section 3 requires the name of organisation which will be handling your shares on Crest, the stock exchange's computer system. This is not necessarily the name of the Pep manager you have chosen, but check with the company if in doubt. Some managers fill it in for you. ■ A completed Pep application form – contact the Pep manager who should provide

a checklist which you should read carefully. You must give your name, address, date of birth, NI or pension number. You MUST sign this form. If you are still unsure consult a financial adviser. Under Inland Revenue rules you have 42 days to make the transfer after the flotation. For A&L shares the cut-off point will be Sunday June 1, although the former building society has set a deadline for applications for its self-select Pep of May 27 to give itself some leeway. Other Pep managers may accept applications until May 30, but check first. A&L shareholders are not alone in having to watch pitfalls on application forms. Halifax Building Society, which floats in June, set a trap for unwary members on page one of the share application form it sent out last month. Anyone who ticks the box on form A asking information on the Halifax Share Pep will be barred from then requesting a share certificate. This will prevent them from applying for a Pep run by any other manager. Rival Pep managers have slammed Halifax. Fidelity Investments said: "We believe the form is misleading. Investors need to read it very carefully or go to a financial adviser." It is particularly damaging as Halifax is only offering a single-company Pep, the most limited type.

Halifax members who want a share certificate should sign and date page two of form A. Halifax's Pep has also caused concern with an obscure option to pay dividends in the form of shares, rather than cash, the usual method. Anthony Woods, a Times reader and retired corporate lawyer, says paying shares would deprive Pep investors of a 20 per cent tax credit and allow the converting society to save up to £7 million in advanced corporation tax a year. However, John Warburton, the Pep's product manager, said paying in shares would only be in exceptional circumstances and would never be to the disadvantage of investors.

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Annual Problem Rate

Research indicates that thousands think only of the APR as an abbreviation for the Annual Percentage Rate. But even those who know that the APR shows the true cost of a loan, the figure is nowadays of limited use. They cannot use it to compare the cost of discounted or fixed-rate mortgages, as lenders can choose which court ruling on APR calculations they wish to follow. Credit card APRs are also a conundrum, with companies basing their APRs on different sizes of debt entirely at whim (see page 34).



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance
Editor

But with rates such as these, in which line of business would you put Provident? Nigel Griffiths, the new Consumer Affairs Minister, has pledged to give the OFT more muscle. However, he must also insist that the organisation uses these powers. CMC, the mortgage business, has for two years exploited the law to double interest rates for late payers and impose redemption penalties in excess of the original debt (see page 42). The OFT intervened only three

months ago to threaten the company with the loss of its credit licence. Mr Griffiths's tougher rules, to be assiduously implemented by the OFT, should force companies such as CMC to compensate all the borrowers they have overcharged. Or he judged unfit ever to have another official licence to deal with the public.

Seconds out

THE life companies' latest rise in the pension scandal is to offer the victim an inadequate amount of compensation in the hope that it will be unquestioningly accepted (see page 31). This strengthens the argument for second opinions on all offers — paid for by the companies.

Not so rosy in the garden when thieves blossom

THE crowds that will flock next week to the Chelsea Flower Show demonstrate how the British treasure their gardens. But few of the green-fingered fraternity realise the value of their shrubs, ornaments and equipment until a thief comes calling. One in ten gardeners has suffered vandalism or theft, according to *Gardening Which?* Yet when they check their insurance cover, they will often find that garden items are either excluded or only partially covered. Theft of garden statuary is one of the biggest growth areas in crime, forcing some householders to chain down urns and cupids. If your garden, shed and fences are your pride and joy, check the extent of your household and building cover and the following:



Urn is popular target for thieves

■ Sainsbury's Homebase launched an insurance plan in February, with two tiers of protection. For £52, up to £3,750 is covered: growing items and tools up to £125 per item, machinery to £200 per article, furniture to £225 and fixtures such as walls and patios to £300. An overall

£7,500 can be covered for a £96 premium, raising the single article limits to £225, £350, £325 and £500 respectively. ■ Many insurers will not protect shrubs that are stolen or vandalised. One exception is Barclays, which covers shrubs for up to £500 per claim with a £25 excess. Statues and equipment are also covered but not for storm damage. ■ Even garden ponds can be stolen. A family in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, suffered the loss of their pond, a £90 pump, two terracotta animals and even a gnome. They were covered by the garden extension to their NatWest property which costs £25 for up to £500 cover. ■ Zurich Life also offers a policy extension for a flat £18 premium. It provides cover for malicious damage or theft of shrubs, ornaments and lawns. Norwich Union policyholders can take up the Plantsmen's Plus scheme, arranged by JSJ Insurance of Stockport, giving up to £2,000 protection for plants and ornaments either in or outside greenhouses, conservatories or summer houses. ■ You should grow thorny shrubs where thieves may enter: postcode portable items; lock outbuildings particularly garden sheds and greenhouses; record serial numbers, dimensions, and value of equipment with photographs.

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Anne Ashworth and Caroline Merrell on pre-Budget options

Pensions could be in Chancellor's sights



In less than a month Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, is expected to deliver the first Labour Budget since Denis Healey raised the red box on April 3, 1979. The pace of change in the first week of the Labour Government has led many to believe that Mr Brown will not only concentrate on the windfall tax for the utilities but also on a significant number of other measures.

Clients of some accountancy firms are said to be concerned about a possible wealth tax, to be imposed on those with wealth above a certain limit. Such a tax exists in France and Switzerland. Geneva has a maximum wealth tax of 4.5 per cent.

Mr Brown's intentions in this area are unclear. But it is widely predicted that he will make himself unpopular in Belgrave and Knightsbridge by closing some of the capital gains and inheritance tax loopholes exploited by the wealthy.

However, if there are tax rises, those on more modest incomes will not be spared. As John Whiting, of Price Waterhouse, the accountants, said: "It's easiest to hit those on middle incomes, as they are sitting ducks, since their salaries are subject to PAYE."

Besides another five-point reduction in mortgage interest

relief, the most likely measure is a cut in pension tax reliefs. Many people are taking action now, putting money into pension plans to benefit from higher-rate relief while it is still available. But such moves may prove futile, as Barbara Williamson, pensions director of Berry Birch & Noble, the independent financial adviser, said: "The timing of the Budget means they could bring in the change in this tax year, which means that it could be too late to benefit from the higher-rate tax relief. The changes could be backdated to April 6."

Mr Whiting added: "It is the norm not to backdate tax changes, but since Labour has a majority of 179, anything is possible." He said the usual procedure was to make changes applicable from Budget day, the next day, or the start of the new tax year.

tions made in this way should escape any Budget change to the tax relief on contributions. Those with personal pensions can contribute between 17.5 per cent and 40 per cent of their earnings according to age.

Charles Levett-Scribner, of Towry Law, the financial advisers, said: "The real decision should be where people invest these extra contributions. The level of the market is very high at the moment, so it may be advisable to put the extra money in to a cash fund until after the Budget."

To date, the usual rumours about the abolition of the tax-free lump sum available when pensionable age is reached have not surfaced. If this concession did become a Budget target, Mr Whiting said the Chancellor would be unlikely to hit those now retiring. He said: "It would be more likely to apply to those joining schemes. This means that if you resign your job and join a new pension scheme, you would not enjoy the tax-free lump sum."

Inheritance tax
Accountants report brisk business in the setting up of trusts and the making of gifts to exempt any removal of various inheritance tax (IHT) concessions. One possible target is potentially exempt transfers (PETS), lifetime gifts that will be free of IHT, provided that the donor survives for seven years. For those feeling generous, now is the time to seek an accountant's help to give money away. Unlimited amounts can be distributed.

Mr Brown is also pledged to increase the sting of capital gains tax. Here reinvestment relief is seen as likely to disappear. This allows people to reinvest the proceeds of a profitable investment in unquoted shares and escape tax.

Excise duties
Higher taxes on drinks seem unlikely, as Labour seems yet to have decided a stance on indirect taxation. As Mr Whiting explains, Britain has traditionally raised large amounts of revenues from taxes on alcohol and cigarettes. These taxes have served as substitutes for the social security payroll taxes common in other European countries, making it



Old Labour: Denis Healey presented the party's last Budget

cheaper to employ a worker in Britain than in some other European Union states. The only tipples tipped for extra taxation are alcohol.

For environmental and health reasons, heavier duties are expected on petrol and cigarettes, which means that you should fill your tank and pop down to the tobacconists.

Dividends
Another widely rumoured change is a cut in the amount of advance corporation tax (ACT) that can be reclaimed, by tax-exempt funds, such as pensions and personal equity plans (PEPs). At present, the entire 20 per cent ACT on dividends can be reclaimed. This change will have a fundamental impact on all pensions.

Brian Wilson, researcher at Bacon & Woodrow, the consulting actuary, believes that abolishing the ACT tax credit altogether could reduce the returns on pensions by as much as 0.75 per cent a year. He said: "An ACT change will also have an impact on the valuation of many occupational pension schemes. The value of assets could be reduced by as much as 5 per cent, while liabilities could rise 15 per cent. Overnight many big company schemes could be underfunded, leaving the companies themselves to foot the bill."

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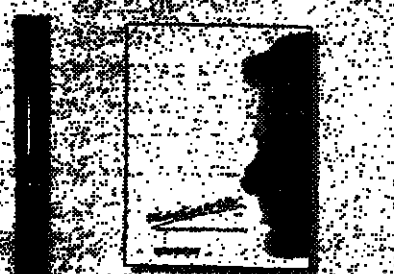
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Caroline Merrell and Gavin Lumsden reveal the hidden costs of investing

Do charges take too big a bite from your investment?

May 1 was not just a significant day for the Labour Party. For many in the investment business, May Day was also a crucial date. For the first time, millions of people who invest billions of pounds in investment and unit trusts and pensions will be given more accurate information about how much the returns on their investments are diminished by the commissions to middlemen, and management and administration charges.

Previous reforms affected only life insurance companies. New rules to make charges clearer met opposition from unit and investment trust companies.

Charges can take huge bites from investment returns. But, in the past, it has been difficult

for investors to work out the impact of these deductions. Here *The Times* looks at how the charges impact on two widely held and widely promoted investments, a pension plan from a blue-blooded City investment house and a Pep with 36,000 investors.

Pension plans

This year Flemings, the investment house, launched a personal pension based on its stable of investment trusts. It was claimed to be one of the cheapest pensions available, a frequent claim nowadays among providers.

At the launch Flemings compared its charges to those deducted by competitors in the low-cost market, such as Legal & General, Virgin and Norwich

Union. Flemings promised to be cheaper than all of these. In a much-publicised row, Virgin disputed the figures and said that Flemings was exploiting a loophole in the previous disclosure rules allowing it to claim its product was cheaper when it was not. Now this loophole has been closed.

Those who invest in the Flemings Investment Trust pension can put their money into one of a number of different funds, each with its own investment criteria. They include Fleming American and Fleming Chinese.

The Personal Investment Authority (PIA), the watchdog, says that investment and unit trusts must follow the same pattern of expenses and charges disclosure as life insurance and personal pension products. This means that the manager must calculate the total charges over the lifetime of the investment and their impact on a hypothetical return; most companies assume a return of 9 per cent.

The charges on Flemings funds vary. For example, the charges on Fleming American reduce the return from 9 per cent to 7.9 per cent. On average, the charges on the pension plan will bring down the returns from 9 per cent to 7.6 per cent per year.

Now, when the different charges are compared on the pension plans, Flemings can no longer claim that it offers the lowest-cost pension. For example charges on Equitable Life's pension only reduce the notional 9 per cent return to 8.1 per cent, while charges on Virgin Direct's pension cut 9 per cent to 7.8 per cent. Both are cheaper than the Flemings pension.

Peps

The Fleming charges seem cheap when compared to Skandia's MultiPep, one of the best-selling Peps. More than 36,000 investors have pumped £250 million into MultiPep since launch three years ago, attracted by the opportunity to choose between 75 Peps from other fund managers.

However, investors pay a high price for this flexibility and there are fears that many are not making the most of it. According to the scheme's new Key Features document detail-

ing charges, the notional 9 per cent annual growth rate is cut to 5.56 per cent for lump-sum investors, a huge reduction in yield of 3.44 per cent. The situation is worse for monthly contributors into MultiPep, who see growth reduced to 4.96 per cent (a reduction in yield of 4.09 per cent).

The reason for the shortfall is that investors are charged twice, once by Skandia and again by the managers of the 75 Peps. The effect of double-charging means investors can give away more than they earn, even over the long term. For example, assuming 9 per cent annual growth again, if you invested £6,000 over 10 years in Jupiter Income, a top-selling Pep, via MultiPep, you would receive £7,730, an increase of £1,730. Not bad? You might not be so pleased to find that £1,930 has gone to Skandia and Jupiter.

Before the PIA's disclosure rules came into force, Skandia defended itself against accusations of double-charging by saying it was able to get discounts from fund managers such as Jupiter. However, these discounts only apply to the initial charges and rarely negate them completely.

For instance, Skandia knocks off 4.53 per cent of the 6.38 per cent fee charged by Jupiter Income. It then levies its own 4.5 per cent fee, giving a total upfront charge of 6.35 per cent. When it comes to annual charges Skandia negotiates no discount and adds its own 0.75 per cent. This pushes the annual cost of investing in Jupiter Income through MultiPep to 2.35 per cent.

Skandia says MultiPep investors have yet to exploit properly the ability to switch between funds at reduced cost, begging the question why they are there at all. Most have stuck with their original selection, says Andre Ozman, the scheme's manager.

So wouldn't it be better for them to buy the underlying Pep fund direct from the manager? "We never said we were cheap. If all you want to do is buy a fund from one manager and have a collection of plans over the years, there are cheaper ways of doing it," he says.

You have been warned - it might be wise to build up your assets outside MultiPep.

POINTS TO WATCH

Before you part with your money, read your key features document which details the aims of the investment, the risk, and the charges. These documents have been radically redesigned.

The most revealing information comes in the sections on charges. Fund managers now have to show how their fees will decrease the return on your investment, whether you invest regularly, or with a lump sum. To do this they assume annual growth for Peps of 9 per cent and 7.5 per cent for unit trusts. Pep charges, for instance, tend to reduce the yield by about 1.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent.

The value of investments, and any income from them, can fall as well as rise and you may not get back the amount invested. Tax concessions can change and their value will depend on your circumstances. Save & Prosper Group is regulated by the Financial Investment Authority and FIA. We only advise on products and services offered by the Flemings and Save & Prosper Marketing Group. 1845/023

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Caroline Merrell asks whether the market is running out of steam

Bull market's Budget fears

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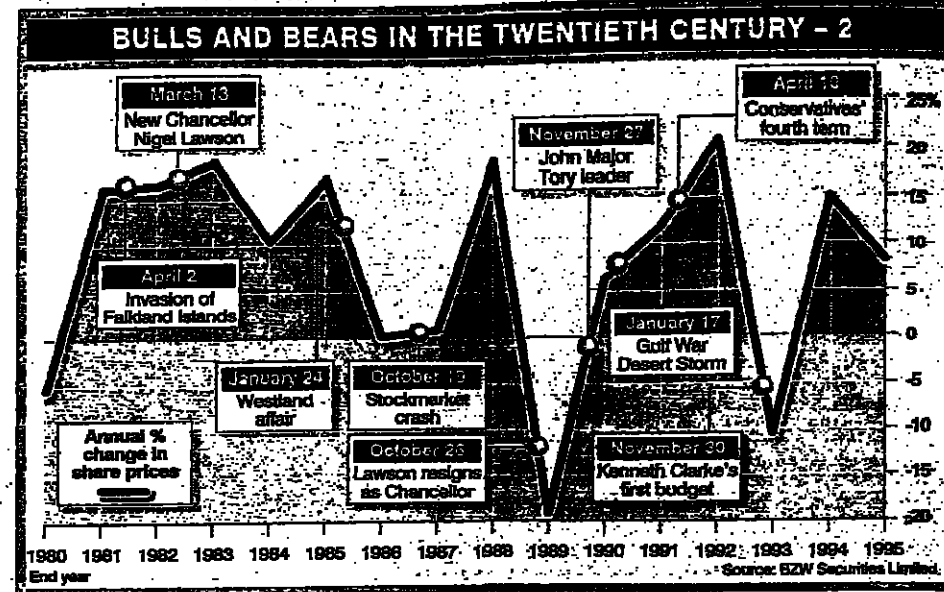
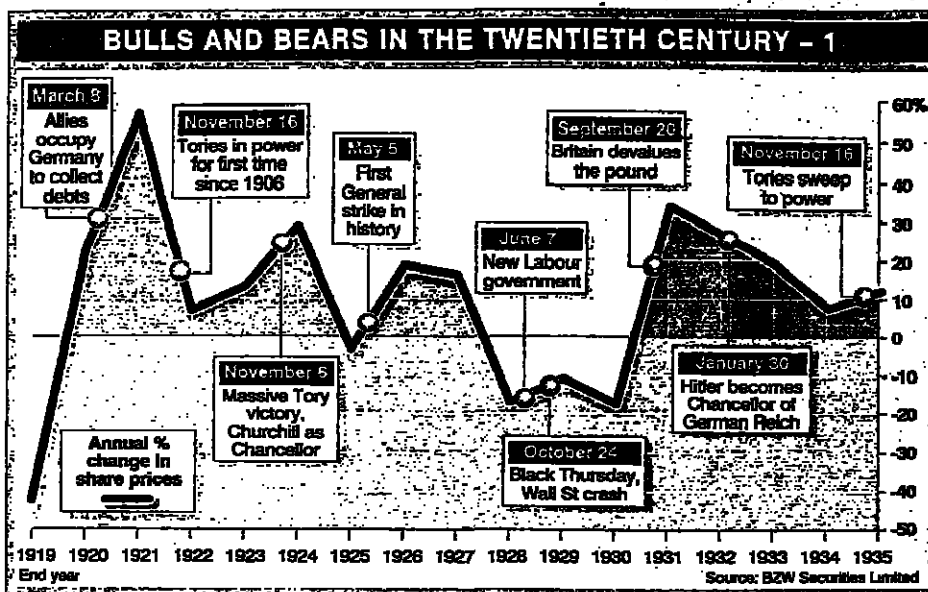
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The UK stock market is now in the throes of the longest bull market of the twentieth century. This week, in spite of pronouncements from the Bank of England about the need for higher interest rates, the market hit new record highs. At the end of the week, the FT-SE 100 index reached 4,693.9, 24 per cent higher than 12 months previously.

Now all eyes are on the first Labour Budget which many believe will be crucial for the market's short-term direction. As the graphs above show, the stock market has risen almost continuously since the end of the 1970s. The previous longest bull run began at the beginning of 1920, and continued to 1936, just before the start of the second world war. During these years, the value of an equity portfolio with all income reinvested rose 1,257 per cent, or the equivalent of 17.7 per cent per annum.

Today's bull market, which seems to have an almost unstoppable quality, has now gone on for longer than that proceeding the Second World War. From 1991 to 1996, equities rose 517 per cent in total, or 12.9 per cent per annum. Taken in context, the much publicised stock market crash of 1987 seems more like a setback, than a reverse in fortunes. The 1990 decrease, provoked by the Gulf War, was much more marked. Over the year the decrease in the market, adjusted for inflation, was 19.1 per cent.

UK market conditions are now beginning to emulate those in the US, where the Dow has also continued to reach new highs. The prices of US stocks have been driven forward by money pouring in from the baby-boom generation investing in equities market to save for their retirement.

Retail investors in the UK do not yet have the same appetite for equity investment as those in the US, but with £22 billion of cash and shares set



End of a bull run: crowds outside the New York Stock Exchange on October 24, 1929

to be released to more than one in three households this year, as the flotations of the Norwich Union, Halifax, Alliance & Leicester, Woolwich and the Northern Rock go ahead, UK investors seem set to take more of an interest in investment in British companies.

The selection of Frank Field, MP for Birkenhead, to be a second to Harriet Harman at the Department of Social Security could also lead to greater participation by UK savers in the equity market. He favours some privatisation of the State pension - which will almost inevitably lead to greater investment in UK companies.

The question many people are asking is whether this bull run in the UK is sustainable. In previous years in this century, bull runs have been bought to a head by international influences. A Labour landslide in 1945 heralded the start of a bull market. Internationally, there were at least four minor wars going on, and Stalin's influence on shaping

is not raised sufficiently, particularly in the personal sector. This would force the Bank to continue to raise interest rates to damp down consumer spending and inflation, leading to a further appreciation in sterling. Short term, the stock market would continue to rise, with financial stocks leading the way and exporters suffering from a strong pound. He added the stock market would finally succumb to the inappropriateness of this policy.

Justin Urquhart Stewart, Barclays Stockbrokers managing director, sees dangers overseas. "An earthquake or banking collapse in Japan could trigger a sudden drop in the markets. Banks in the US and Japan are linked. A Japanese banking collapse could start an international flow-wards spiral."

He also fears sudden increases in inflation perhaps caused by a big rise in commodity prices which could hit market sentiment. "Equities could also fall if interest rates rose enough for investors to consider shifting some investments from equities to cash."

Many investors have not reaped the benefit from the boom in the UK market, says Mark Dampier of Churchill Investments, who says blue chips have been the driving force behind it. While the FT-SE 100 index jumped 24 per cent in the 12 months to May 8, the FT-SE 250 index, which measures the performance of medium-sized companies, actually fell 0.4 per cent. Small companies managed only a 3.8 per cent rise. "All the growth has come from big players such as the banks and oil companies. Many investors will see the headline figure from the FT-SE 100 and wonder why their funds have not done so well. This is because many unit trusts and investment trusts invest across the whole of the All-share and are not heavy in these particular stocks."

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Let bargaining begin over Labour's new tax, says Matthew Wall

BT line is cross on windfall tax

Labour's most widely trailed proposal has been the windfall tax on the privatised utilities and yet its implementation is still shrouded in mystery. There is plenty of scope for some big surprises and a lot of bitter wrangling between business and Government. On Thursday, both BAA and BT threatened that they would take court action if they were subject to the tax.

The Queen's Speech on Wednesday merely confirmed that the legislation would be prepared in Parliament's first session. Details will not be available until the Budget in June or July.

City consensus suggests the tax will raise between £3 billion and £5 billion and will be targeted mostly at the water and electricity industries, where regulation is deemed to have been particularly lax. The electricity industry has made £25.3 billion in pre-tax profits since privatisation in 1990-91 while the water industry has made £10.5 billion.

Most water and electricity companies have already made provision for the tax.



despite some defiant noises from the larger players, and their share prices are thought to reflect its impact.

Labour's manifesto promised "a windfall levy on the excess profits of the privatised utilities to fund a welfare to work programme". But what are "excess" and "utility"? The regulators of the privatised industries capped prices not profits, so there is no clearly defined yardstick.

Valerie Home, technical and regulatory director of the Water Companies Association, which represents the 19 water-only companies of England and Wales, says: "We strongly believe that we should not be included in the windfall tax because the water supply companies have always been in the private

sector since Victorian times. There were no shares sold by the Government, and we have always paid mainstream corporation tax unlike the former utilities".

Reflecting the uncertainty, Peter Boulding, development manager at the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries (CRI), says: "We still don't know whether it will be based on pre-tax profits, operating profits, or profits after tax, or whether it will be calculated on an historical cost basis".

Another variable is the time period over which the tax is calculated, with some companies, such as BT and BG, able to argue that they have faced increased competition in recent years.

But one telecoms analyst at a leading investment bank believes Labour will strike a deal with BT whereby the tax is capped at an agreed level in return for upgrading its copper-wire network to fibre-optic cables and other concessions.

Labour has already hinted that it might lift BT's ban on broadcasting TV signals along its wires. Much horse-trading is still to be done.



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Merger talk lifts shares

Nothing sets the stock market alight like a big, juicy merger. And Monday's announcement of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan's proposed £24 billion tie-up fitted the bill perfectly. This, coupled with a 123-point leap in the Dow Jones industrial average on the same day, meant that the UK stock market began the week with a bang. The FT-SE 100 sailed past last Friday's close of 4,630.9, breaking the 4,700 barrier on Tuesday and Wednesday, before ending the week at 4,693.9.

Guinness rose 86p to 402.5p and GrandMet rose 76p to 91.5p on news of the merger, even though instant profit-taking meant both companies ended the week at 567p and 56p respectively.

The deal left rivals, such as Seagram, the Canadian spirits group, and the UK's Jack Daniel's Allied Domecq, frothing at the



mouth and threatening vigorous lobbying of the world's competition authorities. The joint company, to be called G.M.G. Brands, would have more than 5 per cent of the world spirits market.

But James Wheatcroft, drinks analyst at Panmure Gordon, the broker, said: "We cannot see any reason why this

deal should not go through. G.M.G. could easily hand over the marketing and distribution of certain brands to agencies if there were any competition problems in certain countries."

The euphoria in the market was not shared by all, however. John Wakeley, drinks analyst at Lehman Brothers, the US investment bank, said: "We cannot see any upside to this deal at all and we have downgraded both companies. The spirits industry has been consolidating for the last ten years and has not improved as a result."

"Distribution is not as important as how good your brands are and how well they are marketed. Seagram is not really worried because it knows that, for the next year or so, people at G.M.G. will be too busy worrying about losing their jobs to market Johnny Walker whisky properly."

Mergers in one sector tend to have a knock-on effect and bid talk swept the pharmaceuticals sector again, with Zeneca providing the focus.

On Thursday Glaxo rose 30p, SmithKline Beecham was up 8p and Zeneca climbed 13.5p despite the FT-SE 100 falling 5.7 to 4,681.2.

Elsewhere in the market economic indicators continued to confuse. Although manufacturers' price rises were just 0.8 per cent for the year to April —

Budget fears — page 38

the lowest since September 1986 — the Bank of England gave warning of higher interest rates to come.

In the short-term stock market bulls are predicting that the FT-SE will break 5,000 by the end of this year.

MATTHEW WALL

Turn of the tide favours savers

The tide is beginning to turn to better deals for savers. For more than two years, many of the UK's biggest banks and building societies have neglected savers in favour of offering great deals to borrowers. The Halifax, for example, the biggest building society, pays only 2.45 per cent interest on £1,000 in its instant access account. Many building society savers have been unable to move their money for fear of losing their windfall bonuses.

However, this week Abbey National and the Bradford & Bingley increased their savings rates in response to last week's 0.25 per cent rise in base rates. Abbey National has also launched a new 90-day account with a high interest

rate and a free share-dealing facility to coincide with the flotation of the Halifax. The Halifax is also planning to increase its savings rates, but has not yet disclosed the extent of any increase.

Bradford & Bingley, one of the few remaining societies committed to mutualism, increased savings rates on its accounts by between 0.2 and 0.8 per cent to take effect from May 18. The rate on its postal instant access account, for instance, is rising by 0.8 per cent. Those with £1,000 to invest will now get 5.6 per cent interest, and £25,000 will earn 6.15 per cent. Rates on the 30-day notice account have been increased by 0.65 per cent — rates now vary between 5.75 per cent and 6.3 per cent. The

society has also increased the rates on its tax-exempt special savings account (Pessa) 0.25 per cent to 7 per cent.

The new Abbey National account, Investor 90, will offer an annual interest rate of between 4.4 and 6.55 per cent. Abbey is guaranteeing to increase the rate by at least as much as any base rate rise, within ten working days of a rise. Abbey will pay an extra 1 per cent to those who open one of these accounts before the end of July. The free dealing offer is available only to Investor 90 savers selling Halifax or Alliance & Leicester shares. Abbey has also lifted Investor 30 interest by 0.3 per cent.

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All you need to know about gilts

After the new Chancellor's surprise move in allowing the Bank of England to set interest rates, gilts have enjoyed their best day in more than five years, with some long rising 60 pence to 100 pence. But Ian Bruce, in a book to be published on June 1, asks whether they have risen too far. *Understand Bonds & Gilts in a Day* shows potential investors how to assess the risks and rewards of the bond market and plan an income-based portfolio. The book shows you how to use 24 hours of the yield to maturity, determine convertible parity values, understand relative strength and stochastic indicators and find the price momentum. Send a cheque for £5 to TTL, PO Box 200, Harrogate, HG1 2YR.

If you are planning to start your own business, the latest Inland Revenue publication, available from local tax inquiry centres, offers all the information and forms you will need. The guide deals with income tax, explaining how profits are taxed and when you will have to pay. National Insurance contributions and VAT plus a section on Excise and Inland Customs.

Age Concern has published the 1997-98 edition of *Your Taxes and Savings: a Guide for Older People* that suggests tactics for boosting income in retirement. The guide offers ideas for budgeting and tackles the intricacies of the tax system including sections on income tax, inheritance tax and capital gains tax. The Age Concern guide outlines the various savings and investment options available to older people and details the safeguards that exist to protect these older investors. Priced at £4.95, the guide can be obtained from bookshops, or direct from the Mail Order Dept. Age Concern, London SW16 4BR.

ProShare has launched a guide aimed at investors who are considering buying new issues. The guide includes a list of brokers that offer a packaged service for private investors and their charges. For a free copy of *The ProShare Guide to Brokers' New Issues Services* send a large SAE to ProShare, New Issues Guide, Library Chambers, 13/14 Basinghall Street, London EC2V 5BQ.

LIZANNE ROSE

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ANNUAL INCOME

Rates as at May 15, 1997

Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)
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1,000	Hambro Assured	4.35
5,000	GE Financial Assur	5.80
20,000	GE Financial Assur	5.95
50,000	Hambro Assured	6.10
2 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.05
5,000	GE Financial Assur	6.30
20,000	GE Financial Assur	6.10
50,000	GE Financial Assur	6.25
3 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.40
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.30
20,000	GE Financial Assur	6.30
50,000	GE Financial Assur	6.43
4 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.85
3,000	ITT London & Edin	6.35
5 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.80
3,000	ITT London & Edin	7.00

Source: Chamberlain de Broe 071-434-4222. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

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Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Sainsbury's Bank 0500 405060	Instant Access	Instant	£1	5.75 Y/y
Nationwide BS 0500 302010	InstantDirect	Postal	£200	6.40 Y/y
Nationwide BS 0500 505000	Select Inst	Postal	£5,000	6.35 Y/y
Nationwide BS 0500 302010	InvestDirect	Postal	£10,000	6.45 Y/y

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Nottingham BS 0115 9564422	Postal Plus	30 day p	£2,500	6.40 Y/y
Northern BS 0500 505000	Select 60	60 day p	£25,000	6.70 Y/y
Scarborough BS 01723 500616	Scarborough 100	100 day	£1,000	6.30 Y/y
Leopold Joseph 0171 5882323	100 Day Notice	100 day	£10,000	6.54 Y/y

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Sun Banking Corp 01438 744505	Fxd+feeder a/c	5 year	£8,575	7.55 F/y
Investec Bank (UK) 0171 2031850	Premier+feeder	5 year	£9,000	7.55 Y/y
Bradford & Bingley BS 0800 592588		5 year	£500	7.00 Y/y
Monmouthshire BS 01633 840454		5 year	£1,000	7.00 Y/y

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

Card type	Interest per month	APR%	Fee per annum
RBS Advanta 0800 777770	0.79%N	9.90%N	Nil
Capital One Bank 0800 689000	0.79%N	9.90%N	Nil
Co-operative Bank 0800 108000	0.87%C	10.90%	Nil

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

PERSONAL LOANS	APR	Monthly payment on £3,000 for 3yrs with insurance	Monthly payment on £3,000 for 3yrs no insurance
Northern BS 0345 421421	11.90%N	£112.82	£102.48
Coutts & Co via local branch	12.80%L	n/a	£98.77
Lombard Direct 0800 215000	13.90%N	£120.02	£101.20

Nb. A = APR dependent on credit rating, B = Withdrawals via Bank Clearing System, C = No interest free period, F = Fixed Rate (all other rates variable), H = Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged, L = Lender's cheque account required, N = introductory rate for a limited period, P = By Post only

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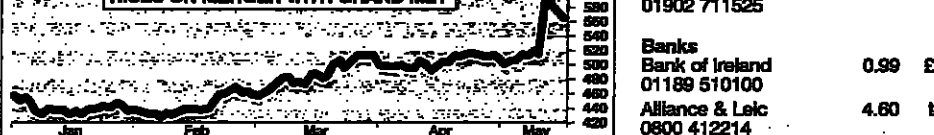
Fixed Rate	Gross coupon	Buying price	Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase amount
Birmingham Midlands	9.375%	112.90	8.280	100.17	1,000
Bradford & Bingley	11.625%	139.86	8.312	100.13	10,000
Bradford & Bingley	13.000%	156.32	8.317	100.20	10,000
Bristol & West	13.000%	161.38	8.288	100.34	1,000
Britannia	12.625%	156.32	8.317	100.13	1,000
Cowen	12.125%	145.91	8.283	100.75	1,000
First National	11.750%	140.36	8.372	100.25	10,000
Halifax	8.750%	109.08	8.021	100.82	50,000
Halifax	12.000%	143.52	7.945	100.28	50,000
Halifax	13.625%	158.52	8.080	100.00	50,000
Leeds & Holbeck	13.750%	160.80	8.318	100.23	1,000
Newcastle	10.750%	130.04	8.238	100.32	1,000
Newcastle	12.625%	151.83	8.315	100.45	1,000
Northern Rock	12.875%	154.03	8.196	100.14	1,000
Skipper	12.875%	154.82	8.316	100.48	1,000

FLOATING RATE

Gross coupon	Buying price	Issue price	Minimum purchase
Cheshire (30/09/27/03) 0.04063%	113.50	100.00	1,000
First Nat (22/09/20/03) 9.12031%	101.50	100.00	1,000

PIBS = Permanent Interest-bearing Shares
Source: ABN AMRO House Gower - 0171 601 0101

SHARE IN FOCUS: GUINNESS RISES ON MERGER WITH GRANT MET



UNIT-LINKED INSURANCE INVESTMENTS

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BASE RATES V MORTGAGES

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Nathan Yates says fund managers are looking overseas again



Since the disruption of German reunification and the 1992 ERM crisis, continental countries have had strikes and unemployment

Continental drift

This week saw yet another record-breaking performance from the UK market, and again continental exchanges have been left trailing in its wake. The FT-SE 100 peaked at a record 4,718.7, compared with a much less spectacular high of 2,317.69 on the FT-SE Eurotrack index. For the UK investor this offers little incentive to buy across the Channel. But behind the headlines and the records, some analysts and fund managers believe European investments could be the next to take off.

Many European unit and investment trusts are already performing better than economic circumstances would indicate. In Chase de Vere's latest performance tables, 11 out of the top 20 Personal equity plan qualifying unit trusts over the past five years are specialist European funds.

This is an impressive statistic considering that Europe has been in the grip of recession for much of the period, and it suggests that the emerging recovery in Europe could bring strong gains for investors. Since the disruption of German reunification and the ERM crisis, continental countries have been plagued by high unemployment and low growth rates.

Last year average GDP growth for European states was 1.6 per cent. This compares badly with the UK's projected growth rate of 2.8 per cent and the US 5.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year. German unemployment is 11.3 per cent, and in France it is 12.5 per cent. European funds have succeeded in spite of these problems because of several factors. Firstly, European interest rates are generally low, since the "Maastricht criteria," which must be satisfied before



countries can take part in monetary union, put a limit on rate increases.

Low interest rates create poor bond yields, so European investors are now moving away from their traditional preoccupation with bonds and buying equities instead. This means that stock markets are strong even in the depths of recession, and should be in the process of growing stronger. In addition, European currencies are now cheap relative to the dollar, so exported goods are less expensive to buy abroad. This has given a boost to industries which rely on exports.

From the fund manager's point of view, Europe also offers good opportunities for those with a talent for selecting stocks. Continental companies are often less streamlined than those in the UK, which means that efficiency drives can bring strong boosts to profits. Fund managers such as Talal Shakerchi, the maverick stockpicker of Old Mutual, have built their success on identifying companies about to restructure.

Now that European GDP growth is beginning to pick up — the International Monetary Fund predicts that it will reach 2.4 per cent this year and 2.8 per cent in 1998 — the advantages of the European market should get into strong returns, according to Roger Guy, manager of Gartmore's European Select Opportu-

ties Fund. "We are very positive about the prospects for Europe," he said. "The whole culture is changing on the Continent. Companies like Volkswagen have cut their costs enormously, and both institutional and private investors are becoming much more focused on equities. The European business cycle is lagging about 2 years behind the US and UK, so it could be a good time to invest."

George Magnus, a leading analyst at UBS, believes there could be an upward correction of 10 per cent in European equities over the next year. Because Europe is at a less ripe stage in its recovery, inflationary pressures are much less of a threat than they are in the US and in the UK. Figures released this week show European inflation at just 1.7 per cent in March.

Chrissie Keen of Fidelity is more cautious, but also claims that European prospects are good. "We are expecting a modest recovery, and though there could be some volatility if there are delays in monetary union, such a big market offers plenty of opportunities," she said.

A further advantage of European unit and investment trusts is that most qualify for inclusion in a PEP. As long as over 50 per cent of a fund's holdings are in European Union countries, it can be placed in a tax-efficient PEP wrapper. You can invest up to £9,000 per year tax-free in PEPs.

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Just £73bn too much interest

Homebuyers will pay £73 billion in "unnecessary and excessive" interest charges over the next 25 years because of the way mortgage lenders calculate repayments, according to a report this week by Yorkshire Bank.

The report found that most lenders calculate interest charges on the capital owed at the beginning of each year. This means that on repayment mortgages they fail to reduce the interest charges as the capital sum is paid off every month.

This interest loophole will cost the typical homeowner an extra £13,680 over the next 25 years. The figure assumes a standard variable rate repayment mortgage of £51,000 charged at a rate averaging 7.24 per cent.

Yorkshire Bank is offering a Flexible Payment Mortgage which calculates interest

daily. It claims that this mortgage is one of the few which gives customers full value for their repayments.

"Interest does not have to be calculated yearly," said Chris Herbert of Yorkshire Bank. "Those lenders who follow this practice are effectively receiving a 12-month interest-free loan each year from their customers." Other lenders who calculate interest daily include Citibank, Birmingham Midshires, Barclays and NatWest.

The Yorkshire Bank also found that a third of mortgage account holders had no idea when they were due to pay off their mortgage entirely, 56 per cent did not know their monthly repayments, and 20 per cent believed the mortgage term is always 25 years.

NATHAN YATES

Gavin Lumsden on a Government warning to loan companies

Lenders incur minister's wrath on rates

Nigel Griffiths, Minister for Consumer Affairs, launched an outspoken attack on all lenders this week, warning them to clean up their act or face tough new laws within the next few months.

In an exclusive interview with *The Times*, Mr Griffiths condemned banks and building societies for concealing the true costs of low-start and discount loans. He is waiting to see what the mortgage lenders' new voluntary code, which begins in July, will entail, but may well demand more action.

However, Mr Griffiths reserved his particular ire for lenders who operate off the high street and charge poor people exorbitantly high rates of interest on their loans. "We take a dim view of people on low income being exploited by lenders," Companies that operate in this market (which could include City Mortgage Corporation, Provident Financial and Cattle) had been put "under review", he said.

The minister's intervention is particularly welcome for borrowers from CMC, who have begun to see the tide swing in their favour after suffering years of punitive charges followed up by aggressive legal action. The company has become notorious for trapping borrowers with dual interest rates which start low but are doubled at the slightest delay in payment.

It has also inflicted huge redemption penalties on borrowers wishing to pay off their loans early using an obscure part of the Consumer Credit Act called rule 78.

Last week, three months after John Bridgeman, Director-General of the Office of

Fair Trading, threatened to remove CMC's credit licence, the company caved in and announced it would abandon rule 78 from August. The company says it is now in "constructive dialogue" with the OFT on the rest of its practices.

This will hopefully lead to more changes at the US lender, particularly as Mr Griffiths is planning to strengthen the powers of the OFT when dealing with controversial lenders.

However, CMC's partial climbdown has only stiffened borrowers' resolve to fight on through the courts. Last month they formed the CMC Victims' Association (CMCVA). Carol Riley, its national organiser, welcomed the move but wants the company to compensate borrowers who have paid the excessive redemption penalties in the past. She also wants CMC to stop its use of dual interest rates. The company entices borrowers with a discount rate of up to 9 per cent but doubles this to an 18 per cent "standard" rate if there is the slightest delay in payment.

Although it claims to take a sympathetic line with borrowers who run into trouble, it has initiated more than 1,200 court proceedings in just two years. This is a huge tally for a company which has 30,000 borrowers.

CMC defends itself by saying it provides a service to people who cannot borrow on the high street. It points out that its customer care service booklet, which all borrowers are required to sign, highlights the fact that its interest rates are high. However, although the warnings are explicit, the document is short on

Ever-rising penalties



Jennifer Carnegie, a manager of a children's nursery in Romford, Essex, is typical of the complaints received by CMCVA (Gavin Lumsden writes).

Between 1995 and 1996, the single mother of three took out a £37,800 mortgage with CMC via a broker based in Newcastle under Lyme. Ms Carnegie, seen with sons Daniel, Edward and Michael, claims the firm's director told her the redemption penalties would be equivalent to six months' payments. By 1996 her nursery business was suffering

and she was already finding the £437 monthly payments difficult to meet. In spite of this, CMC frequently switched her to the standard rate of 6.99 when she paid late. When she asked for a redemption figure later she was shocked to be told it was £45,000.

Realising she was over her head, she decided to sell her house and move into a council house. She quickly accepted an offer of £58,000 on her house, but was then told by CMC that the redemption penalty had risen to £55,000. The company

then started repossession proceedings against her, although she was on the point of raising money to repay its original loan. The company now claims £60,000.

David Milton, a solicitor representing CMCVA, is pushing for a trial date. Meanwhile, another case at a High Court in London is pending.

CMCVA hopes this will set a precedent which will force CMC to change its ways. The wave of legal actions is a setback for CMC, which is used to having the upper hand.

details. A former employee of a broker tied to CMC, has revealed to *The Times* how his company was paid up to 10 per cent commission on the value of the loan. He claims he was taught to evade people's questions about charges, whilst encouraging them to lie about their income in order to get a loan. Although borrowers were pressurised to sign up, they were required to hand-write their own application letter first, which limited any comeback on CMC.

He suspects that CMC's hope is to acquire people's homes. "Why else would you lend to people who are going to struggle to pay?"

How *The Times* broke the story on CMC yesterday

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RATES OF INTEREST Effective from 18th May 1997

	Gross % p.a.	Net rate % p.a.
Direct Premium Account		
Annual Interest		
£10,000 - £24,999	5.80	4.48
£25,000 - £49,999	5.90	4.72
£50,000 +	6.15	4.92
Monthly Income		
£10,000 - £24,999	5.85	4.52
£25,000 +	5.90	4.72
Direct Notice Account		
Annual Interest		
£1,000 - £9,999	5.75	4.60
£10,000 - £24,999	6.10	4.88
£25,000 +	6.30	5.04
Monthly Income		
£10,000 - £24,999	5.85	4.68
£25,000 +	6.05	4.84
Direct 60 Account (No longer available to new investors)		
Annual Interest		
£5,000 - £14,999	6.20	4.96
£15,000 - £24,999	6.40	5.12
£25,000 - £49,999	6.50	5.20
£50,000 +	6.60	5.28
Monthly Income		
£15,000 - £24,999	6.15	4.92
£25,000 - £49,999	6.25	5.00
£50,000 +	6.35	5.08
Direct 90 Account (No longer available to new investors)		
Annual Interest		
£15,000 - £24,999	6.55	5.24
£25,000 - £49,999	6.65	5.32
£50,000 +	6.75	5.40
Monthly Income		
£15,000 - £24,999	6.30	5.04
£25,000 - £49,999	6.45	5.16
£50,000 +	6.55	5.24
Direct Preference TESSA (Linked investment)		
£3,001 +	7.05*	-
Direct Classic TESSA (Linked investment)		
£500 +	7.00	-

*Includes bonus of 0.05% gross p.a.

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Interest rates are variable and correct at time of going to press. Interest will be paid net of the lower rate of income tax (currently 20%) or subject to the required certification, gross. Where the tax deducted exceeds an investor's tax liability (if any), a claim may be made for repayment of tax. Net equities are rounded and are for illustrative purposes only. The Society's Timesaver bonus rate for ICT will be payable on accounts falling below minimum balance requirements for annual interest or monthly income.

Woolwich lets children down

From Mr C. Johnson
Sir, Some children will be getting nothing at all from the Woolwich float, not even the cash bonus, even worse than your article. (Let down, in payout, April 26). My seven-year-old is young enough to have my wife as trustee on her account. All she did was put her birthday money in her account, taking it over £100. As she had less than £100 on the first date she doesn't get shares, but as she had more than £100 on the second, she got a vote - and if you have a vote, you don't get the bonus. Repeated complaints to the Woolwich about the share certificate of this brought nothing but policy restatements. What kind of financial institution fines a seven-year-old for saving her birthday money? Yours faithfully,
CLIVE JOHNSON,
146 Warden Crescent,
Luton, Bedfordshire.

Tax plea

From Mr M.H. Legge
Sir, It is to be hoped that not too many taxpayers who are expected to swell the contents of the Treasury's coffers by the payment of fines and penalties, will come from the ranks of those whose education and experience has failed to equip them with the knowledge and ability to complete the self-assessment forms. A number of my friends are caught in this net, because they have a small occupational pension and a small amount of income from small savings. On the one hand, the aggregate income in each case is far too low to meet, or to justify, the fees of a professional adviser and on the other hand, they find the forms utterly baffling. There ought to be a policy of lenience, at least for the first year. Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL LEGGE,
Culland Cottage,
Brailsford, Derbyshire.

The indexed rise for calculating the indexation allowance on assets disposed of in February 1997

Month purchased	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
January	0.881	0.788	0.704	0.615	0.554	0.504	0.400	
February	0.873	0.782	0.690	0.609	0.548	0.498	0.390	
March	0.866	0.776	0.685	0.607	0.546	0.496	0.388	
April	0.918	0.844	0.753	0.640	0.581	0.527	0.469	0.380
May	0.904	0.838	0.747	0.632	0.588	0.525	0.468	0.381
June	0.890	0.832	0.742	0.629	0.589	0.525	0.468	0.347
July	0.898	0.822	0.744	0.632	0.594	0.527	0.468	0.346
August	0.897	0.814	0.729	0.627	0.589	0.522	0.440	0.342
September	0.898	0.808	0.724	0.628	0.581	0.518	0.434	0.333
October	0.889	0.799	0.714	0.629	0.578	0.510	0.419	0.323
November	0.880	0.798	0.709	0.620	0.565	0.498	0.413	0.311
December	0.883	0.798	0.710	0.620	0.565	0.498	0.408	0.306
1990	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1991	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1992	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1993	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1994	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1995	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1996	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
1997	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

The 1997 rates for disposals by individuals on or after April 6, 1995 (April 1, 1995 for companies) in the month in which the allowable expenditure was incurred, or March 1992 where the expenditure was incurred before that month.

Tax credit cut equals 1p on income tax

From Mr M.C. Fitzpatrick
Sir, Various organisations and business leaders have voiced concerns regarding the possibility of the new Government cutting the rate of dividend tax credit (DTC). You may be interested in how these concerns translate into hard figures.

Currently, the rate of DTC is 20 per cent calculated on the gross dividend. Thus, a cash dividend of £80 carries a DTC of £20; the dividend is regarded for tax purposes as a gross dividend of £100 (£80 cash plus £20 DTC).

Currently, basic-rate taxpayers pay tax at 20 per cent on dividend income; this liability is satisfied by the DTC. Non-taxpayers can retain the DTC in cash from the Revenue. It has been suggested that the Government might cut the DTC rate to 15 per cent and basic-rate taxpayers would then pay income tax at 15 per cent on dividend income.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that this would raise £2 billion pa. There follows an analysis of the victims of such a move.

Charities would lose about £50 million per annum in reduced cash receipts from the Revenue.

Pension funds would lose about £1.4 billion pa in reduced receipts. At the very least, it seems likely that this shortfall would be made up from increased member contributions; the resulting higher contribution would be equivalent to raising the basic rate of income tax (UK wide) by nearly a penny in the pound.

Higher-rate taxpayers currently pay higher-rate tax of £20 on an £80 cash dividend. With the DTC reduced to 15 per cent, they would pay £23.50 on each £80 cash dividend, raising £350 million pa for the Treasury.

Currently, a 1p repays £20 from the Revenue for each £80 dividend received from its UK equity investments. This reclaim would drop to about £14, costing Peps a sum approaching £100 million pa. The three million or so holders of Peps would each lose about £30 pa on average.

Finally, individual non-taxpayers and certain overseas owners of UK equities would

(in aggregate) reclaim about £100 million less from the Revenue each year.

The Conservatives were the first to instigate a reduction in the rate of DTC, when Chancellor Lamont reduced it from 25 per cent to 20 per cent in 1993. The Government might be tempted to reduce it still further, in the belief that such a move represents a victimless tax increase. Any budding Chancellor who has read this letter will by now have a clearer idea precisely who the victims are.

Yours faithfully,
MAURICE FITZPATRICK,
Senior Tax Consultant,
Chantrey Vellacott
Chartered Accountants,
Russell Square House,
10-12 Russell Square, WC1.

Full of pep at 156...



From Mr P.S. McLean
Sir, I received a letter from Lloyds Bank inviting me to top-up my Pep for this tax year. The personal details section of the application form gives my date of birth as 10/01/1941. Do you think I should ask Buckingham Palace why during the past 56

years I have received not a single telegram recognising my longevity, and Social Security why my state pension, granted in 1992 was not back-dated to 1906? Yours faithfully,
P. MCLEAN,
17 Woodfield Lane,
Ashted, Surrey.

Investor hurt by shortfall was unaware of cut in final bonus

From Mr A.W. Curbishley
Sir, Mr S.M. Gold (Unfriendly Move, Weekend Money Letters, April 26) has my sympathy. I too am a victim of Friends Provident, having suffered an unreasonable shortfall of £744 on the maturity value of a modest £20 a month ten-year endowment (originally with UK Provident) which matured in June 1995.

Friends Provident's defence is that investment conditions had been very bad over the ten-year period and in any case I should have been aware of UK Provident's problems and that of the merger.

However, I was totally unaware that Friends Provident would slash the projected terminal bonus by 50 per cent. The reality is that Friends Provident has had the use of my premiums over a ten-year period and, taking account of the inflationary effect on

money, simply returned my premiums to me.

If I have been disappointed over the policy return, then so must many hundreds of UK Provident members who entered their contracts in good faith at that time.

Yours faithfully,
A. CURBISHLEY,
35 Kilburn Road,
Harburn,
Stockton, Cleveland.

Letters to the Weekend Money section are welcomed, but The Times regrets that it cannot give individual replies or advice. No legal responsibility can be accepted for the advice or statements given in these columns and it must be emphasised that independent professional advice should always be sought over all investment matters. Letters to Weekend Money can be sent by fax on 0171-752 5082.

Shareholders could give 10% of their windfalls to charity

From Mr D.B. Mackenzie
Sir, We are being courted with advice on how to invest the building society windfall payouts. On demutualisation this year, four building societies will create 16 million new small shareholders with £20 billion to invest. It seems an ideal opportunity for hard pressed charities to become beneficiaries.

If 10 per cent of the new

shareholders were to donate 10 per cent of their windfall to charity this would result in a massive golden egg of £200 million to charity funds.

Demutualisation windfalls only come once so now is the time for benevolence.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID MACKENZIE,
Hillhouse,
Stewarton,
Ayrshire.

Income charm of discounted trusts

From Mr M.W.F. Jenkin
Sir, In your article (Raiders sail in as investment trusts hit the doldrums, April 26) you failed to mention a certain advantage obtained whenever you buy an investment trust at a discount, namely that you obtain the whole income on the portfolio assets, though you are buying those assets cheap; the greater the discount, the greater the enhancement to the immediate and future (growing) income return.

Yours faithfully,
M. JENKIN,
Queen Anne House,
4a Dukes Lane, WS.

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Balance	Annual % Gross	Monthly Interest % Gross	Monthly Interest % Gross CAR
£250,000 +	6.75%	6.55%	6.75%
£100,000 +	6.70%	6.50%	6.70%
£50,000 +	6.60%	6.41%	6.60%
£25,000 +	6.55%	6.36%	6.55%
£10,000 +	6.50%	6.31%	6.50%

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£50,000-£99,999	7.50%
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TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

Company	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES				
AB InBev	12.50	+0.10	4.8	12.5
Carlsberg	11.80	+0.05	5.2	11.8
Heineken	13.20	+0.15	4.5	13.2
Interbrew	14.50	+0.20	4.0	14.5
Orkla	15.00	+0.10	3.8	15.0
Reckitt Benckiser	16.50	+0.25	3.5	16.5
Stellbrink	17.00	+0.15	3.2	17.0
Unilever	18.50	+0.20	3.0	18.5
Wm. S. & J.	19.00	+0.10	2.8	19.0
Yallahs	20.00	+0.15	2.5	20.0
BANKS				
Bank of America	25.00	+0.50	4.0	25.0
Bank of China	26.00	+0.60	3.8	26.0
Bank of India	27.00	+0.70	3.6	27.0
Bank of Japan	28.00	+0.80	3.4	28.0
Bank of Korea	29.00	+0.90	3.2	29.0
Bank of London	30.00	+1.00	3.0	30.0
Bank of Mexico	31.00	+1.10	2.8	31.0
Bank of New York	32.00	+1.20	2.6	32.0
Bank of Paris	33.00	+1.30	2.4	33.0
Bank of Spain	34.00	+1.40	2.2	34.0
Bank of Sweden	35.00	+1.50	2.0	35.0
Bank of Switzerland	36.00	+1.60	1.8	36.0
Bank of Taiwan	37.00	+1.70	1.6	37.0
Bank of Thailand	38.00	+1.80	1.4	38.0
Bank of Vietnam	39.00	+1.90	1.2	39.0
Bank of Yugoslavia	40.00	+2.00	1.0	40.0
Bank of Zaire	41.00	+2.10	0.8	41.0
Bank of Zimbabwe	42.00	+2.20	0.6	42.0
BREWERIES, PUBS & REST				
Asahi	45.00	+0.50	4.5	45.0
Beck's	46.00	+0.60	4.3	46.0
Carlsberg	47.00	+0.70	4.1	47.0
Heineken	48.00	+0.80	3.9	48.0
Interbrew	49.00	+0.90	3.7	49.0
Orkla	50.00	+1.00	3.5	50.0
Reckitt Benckiser	51.00	+1.10	3.3	51.0
Stellbrink	52.00	+1.20	3.1	52.0
Unilever	53.00	+1.30	2.9	53.0
Wm. S. & J.	54.00	+1.40	2.7	54.0
Yallahs	55.00	+1.50	2.5	55.0
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS				
Alcoa	58.00	+0.80	5.0	58.0
Boeing	59.00	+0.90	4.8	59.0
General Electric	60.00	+1.00	4.6	60.0
IBM	61.00	+1.10	4.4	61.0
Intel	62.00	+1.20	4.2	62.0
Microsoft	63.00	+1.30	4.0	63.0
Northern Telecom	64.00	+1.40	3.8	64.0
Oracle	65.00	+1.50	3.6	65.0
SAP	66.00	+1.60	3.4	66.0
Siemens	67.00	+1.70	3.2	67.0
Unilever	68.00	+1.80	3.0	68.0
Wm. S. & J.	69.00	+1.90	2.8	69.0
Yallahs	70.00	+2.00	2.6	70.0
ENGINEERING VEHICLES				
BMW	72.00	+0.50	5.5	72.0
Mercedes-Benz	73.00	+0.60	5.3	73.0
Volkswagen	74.00	+0.70	5.1	74.0
Audi	75.00	+0.80	4.9	75.0
Porsche	76.00	+0.90	4.7	76.0
Ford	77.00	+1.00	4.5	77.0
General Motors	78.00	+1.10	4.3	78.0
Chrysler	79.00	+1.20	4.1	79.0
Jeep	80.00	+1.30	3.9	80.0
Dodge	81.00	+1.40	3.7	81.0
RAM	82.00	+1.50	3.5	82.0
FOOD MANUFACTURERS				
AB InBev	85.00	+0.50	4.8	85.0
Carlsberg	86.00	+0.60	4.6	86.0
Heineken	87.00	+0.70	4.4	87.0
Interbrew	88.00	+0.80	4.2	88.0
Orkla	89.00	+0.90	4.0	89.0
Reckitt Benckiser	90.00	+1.00	3.8	90.0
Stellbrink	91.00	+1.10	3.6	91.0
Unilever	92.00	+1.20	3.4	92.0
Wm. S. & J.	93.00	+1.30	3.2	93.0
Yallahs	94.00	+1.40	3.0	94.0
BUILDING & CONSTRUCT				
Bechtel	97.00	+0.50	5.0	97.0
Skanska	98.00	+0.60	4.8	98.0
Stantec	99.00	+0.70	4.6	99.0
Parsons	100.00	+0.80	4.4	100.0
Hochtief	101.00	+0.90	4.2	101.0
Fluor	102.00	+1.00	4.0	102.0
URS	103.00	+1.10	3.8	103.0
WSP	104.00	+1.20	3.6	104.0
URS	105.00	+1.30	3.4	105.0
URS	106.00	+1.40	3.2	106.0
URS	107.00	+1.50	3.0	107.0
ELECTRICITY				
Edison	110.00	+0.50	5.0	110.0
Hydro	111.00	+0.60	4.8	111.0
Nuclear	112.00	+0.70	4.6	112.0
Renewable	113.00	+0.80	4.4	113.0
Coal	114.00	+0.90	4.2	114.0
Oil	115.00	+1.00	4.0	115.0
Gas	116.00	+1.10	3.8	116.0
Water	117.00	+1.20	3.6	117.0
Waste	118.00	+1.30	3.4	118.0
Telecom	119.00	+1.40	3.2	119.0
Media	120.00	+1.50	3.0	120.0
ELECTRONIC & ELECT				
Intel	125.00	+0.50	5.0	125.0
Microsoft	126.00	+0.60	4.8	126.0
IBM	127.00	+0.70	4.6	127.0
Oracle	128.00	+0.80	4.4	128.0
SAP	129.00	+0.90	4.2	129.0
Siemens	130.00	+1.00	4.0	130.0
Unilever	131.00	+1.10	3.8	131.0
Wm. S. & J.	132.00	+1.20	3.6	132.0
Yallahs	133.00	+1.30	3.4	133.0
HEALTHCARE				
Novartis	135.00	+0.50	5.0	135.0
Roche	136.00	+0.60	4.8	136.0
Novartis	137.00	+0.70	4.6	137.0
Roche	138.00	+0.80	4.4	138.0
Novartis	139.00	+0.90	4.2	139.0
Roche	140.00	+1.00	4.0	140.0
Novartis	141.00	+1.10	3.8	141.0
Roche	142.00	+1.20	3.6	142.0
Novartis	143.00	+1.30	3.4	143.0
Roche	144.00	+1.40	3.2	144.0
HOUSEHOLD GOODS				
Unilever	145.00	+0.50	5.0	145.0
Wm. S. & J.	146.00	+0.60	4.8	146.0
Yallahs	147.00	+0.70	4.6	147.0
Unilever	148.00	+0.80	4.4	148.0
Wm. S. & J.	149.00	+0.90	4.2	149.0
Yallahs	150.00	+1.00	4.0	150.0
Unilever	151.00	+1.10	3.8	151.0
Wm. S. & J.	152.00	+1.20	3.6	152.0
Yallahs	153.00	+1.30	3.4	153.0
Unilever	154.00	+1.40	3.2	154.0
ENGINEERING				
Bechtel	155.00	+0.50	5.0	155.0
Skanska	156.00	+0.60	4.8	156.0
Stantec	157.00	+0.70	4.6	157.0
Parsons	158.00	+0.80	4.4	158.0
Hochtief	159.00	+0.90	4.2	159.0
Fluor	160.00	+1.00	4.0	160.0
URS	161.00	+1.10	3.8	161.0
WSP	162.00	+1.20	3.6	162.0
URS	163.00	+1.30	3.4	163.0
URS	164.00	+1.40	3.2	164.0
CHEMICALS				
Novartis	165.00	+0.50	5.0	165.0
Roche	166.00	+0.60	4.8	166.0
Novartis	167.00	+0.70	4.6	167.0
Roche	168.00	+0.80	4.4	168.0
Novartis	169.00	+0.90	4.2	169.0
Roche	170.00	+1.00	4.0	170.0
Novartis	171.00	+1.10	3.8	171.0
Roche	172.00	+1.20	3.6	172.0
Novartis	173.00	+1.30	3.4	173.0
Roche	174.00	+1.40	3.2	174.0
DISTRIBUTORS				
Unilever	175.00	+0.50	5.0	175.0
Wm. S. & J.	176.00	+0.60	4.8	176.0
Yallahs	177.00	+0.70	4.6	177.0
Unilever	178.00	+0.80	4.4	178.0
Wm. S. & J.	179.00	+0.90	4.2	179.0
Yallahs	180.00	+1.00	4.0	180.0
Unilever	181.00	+1.10	3.8	181.0
Wm. S. & J.	182.00	+1.20	3.6	182.0
Yallahs	183.00	+1.30	3.4	183.0
Unilever	184.00	+1.40	3.2	184.0

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THE TIMES SATURDAY MAY 17 1997

Whitaker
Victor
Child

Hope

Jukes loses winning chances

Steward resigns, page 5

Coke said: "Stop your minute of silence, boys, leave 'em."

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

... ..

GOLF: LEADER HOLDS NERVE AT ENGLISH OPEN IN ATTEMPT TO SECURE BREAKTHROUGH VICTORY

Chapman keeps mind on the present

By JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT

A HANDSOME new course record of 63, by Jay Townsend, rounds of 64 by Darren Clarke, Lee Westwood and José Cerezo, a 65 by Dennis Edlund and a collection of 66s, including one by Steve Webster, proved that the Hanbury Manor course could yield to good golf in the second round of the Alamo English Open yesterday.

The score that mattered, though, was that of Roger Chapman, the Englishman who led after a 66 in the first round and is attempting to rid himself of the tag of being one of the best players never to have won an event in Europe in a 16-year professional career.

Chapman has come second 11 times around the world and one of the consequences of this is that his name is not deeply implanted in the consciousness of golf followers. Two spectators were overheard talking to one another as follows: "I see that Colin Chapman's leading again." This came after the day when a radio announcer had referred to him as "the Australian, Roger Chapman".

Chapman arrived at the course knowing that, on such a calm and sunny day, his overnight score of six under par would have been overtaken. There he met Chris Linstead, the sports psychologist with whom he works, who gave him some words of advice. "It's another day," he told Chapman. "Stay in the present. Don't go into the future or the past. Stay focused."

Still, to know the course was playing short and to be able to go out and take advantage of it are two very different things. Chapman is beginning to feel the cold steel of pressure on his neck, but he responded bravely with another 66 and, at 12 under par, has opened a one-stroke lead over Edlund and two strokes over Webster. Chapman's second round included eight birdies and an eagle, yet the fact that it also



Chapman looked in fine shape in securing eight birdies and an eagle during his second round at the Hanbury Manor course yesterday

contained five pars and four bogeys indicates how erratic it was. Accuracy is one of the main requirements to overcome this course and Chapman was inaccurate off the tee and drove into the rough on each of the four holes where he ran up bogeys.

His putting was excellent, however, and on the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th his scoring was extraordinary. On the 8th, he drove into the left rough, but hit a three-iron 206 yards and holed from 25 feet. On the 9th, he drove into the right rough

and holed an 18-foot putt for his second birdie in a row.

The way that Chapman, Tony Johnstone and Wayne Webster played the 10th could provide a quiz question. How did three men take ten strokes on one par-four hole when only one of them putted? Answer: one man, Chapman, holed his second shot, the second man, Johnstone, holed his third shot, from a bunker, while Webster, the third, three-putted.

Chapman's five-iron travelled 179 yards and disappeared into the hole after one bounce. On the next tee, he hit a magnificent stroke that looked as though it was going to hit the flag. In such a mood, there was bound to be a good chance he would hole the 12-foot putt and he did.

Webster is one of the conundrums of the PCA European Tour. He was the leading amateur at the 1995 Open and won the Tour school at San Roque that same year. Then it all went wrong. In his first year as a professional, he missed the cut in his first eight

tournaments and had to return to the qualifying school, where he finished fourth.

When Webster missed the cut in six of his first seven events on the European Tour this year, but then he came fourth in Italy. He is the sort of player who would benefit from having an experienced campaigner carrying his bag and, in Andy Procter, who caddied for Nick Faldo in the Eighties, he has someone able to do just that. Procter deserves some credit for Webster's rounds of 68 and 66.

SCORES

Great Britain and Ireland unless stated
LEADERS AFTER TWO ROUNDS: 132: R Chapman 66, 66; 133: D Edlund (Swe) 66, 67; 134: J Townsend (US) 72, 63; 135: D Clarke (Ire) 72, 64; 136: L Westwood 72, 64; 137: J Cerezo (Esp) 67, 70; 138: J Cerezo (Esp) 67, 70; 139: R Johnston (Swe) 71, 67; 140: P Johnston (Swe) 70, 68; 141: S McAlister 71, 69; 142: S McAlister 71, 69; 143: S McAlister 71, 69; 144: S McAlister 71, 69; 145: S McAlister 71, 69; 146: S McAlister 71, 69; 147: S McAlister 71, 69; 148: S McAlister 71, 69; 149: S McAlister 71, 69; 150: S McAlister 71, 69; 151: S McAlister 71, 69; 152: S McAlister 71, 69; 153: S McAlister 71, 69; 154: S McAlister 71, 69; 155: S McAlister 71, 69; 156: S McAlister 71, 69; 157: S McAlister 71, 69; 158: S McAlister 71, 69; 159: S McAlister 71, 69; 160: S McAlister 71, 69; 161: S McAlister 71, 69; 162: S McAlister 71, 69; 163: S McAlister 71, 69; 164: S McAlister 71, 69; 165: S McAlister 71, 69; 166: S McAlister 71, 69; 167: S McAlister 71, 69; 168: S McAlister 71, 69; 169: S McAlister 71, 69; 170: S McAlister 71, 69; 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EQUESTRIANISM 45
Riders rising to the challenge at Windsor Horse Show

SPORT

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GOLF 51

Why the greens gave Davies food for thought



Chelsea start as Wembley favourites while Middlesbrough prepare to say farewells

Juninho seeks to lead final dance

By OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

BOBBY ROBSON, the former England manager, has grown fond of comparing footballing matches with dances. England versus Spain in Euro 96 was a paso doble, he said; Barcelona against Real Madrid last Saturday was a violent tango.

Today, others may say the FA Cup Final will be an intoxicating samba, but, in reality, it is destined to be the last waltz.

It should be a happy dance, an exuberant festival of the best that English club football has to offer, a high-profile head-to-head between the two teams who have pioneered the influx of foreign players into the FA Cup Final.

It should be a happy dance, an exuberant festival of the best that English club football has to offer, a high-profile head-to-head between the two teams who have pioneered the influx of foreign players into the FA Cup Final.

It will, however, be tinged with a rare poignancy, too, for an occasion that usually begins amid uncontained joy. For Chelsea, perhaps, there

may be only optimism, excitement about a future that looks ever brighter, but, for Middlesbrough supporters, it is destined to be a final riddled with finality.

For them, it will be an emotional farewell party, a wake for a host of exotic stars who seem certain to desert the club that astonished the football world by enticing them to Teesside in the first place.

Middlesbrough's relegation from the Premiership seems certain to rob them of the glamour they so fleetingly glimpsed.

Juninho, their talisman, the player who has given them his heart and soul, who has never denigrated his new home, who has run until he dropped, is the subject of an offer from Atletico Madrid; Ravanelli, more pragmatic, more detached, is being linked with AC Milan; Emerson, the enfant terrible, may join Juninho in Spain.

Wembley, though, and the Cup Final, is the kind of stage that the Middlesbrough trio crave, the sort of platform that brought them to England in the first place. If they are inspired by the atmosphere and spurred on by their impending departures to indulge in a final fling, Middles-

brough may salvage something from their season. The Chelsea manager, Rudi Gullit, is unlikely to try to shackle Juninho with a man-marker, as Leicester City did so effectively during the Coca-Cola Cup final and its replay, when they detailed the dogged Pontus Kaamark to be the Brazilian's shadow.

Emerson played so poorly in the fateful last league game of the season at Elland Road that Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, substituted him, but he, too, is a player of rare talent, a surging midfield dynamo who has been stung by moves to make him a scapegoat for the team's failures this season.

If Ravanelli has recovered sufficiently from the back and hamstring problems that he sustained in the midst of Middlesbrough's 3-3 draw at Old Trafford 12 days ago, then together the trio might prove more than Chelsea's suspect defence can cope with.

The defensive frailties of both teams militate towards a high-scoring game, a more open game than the disappointing bore of Manchester United's 1-0 victory over Liverpool last year — a game salvaged only by Eric Cantona's late winner.

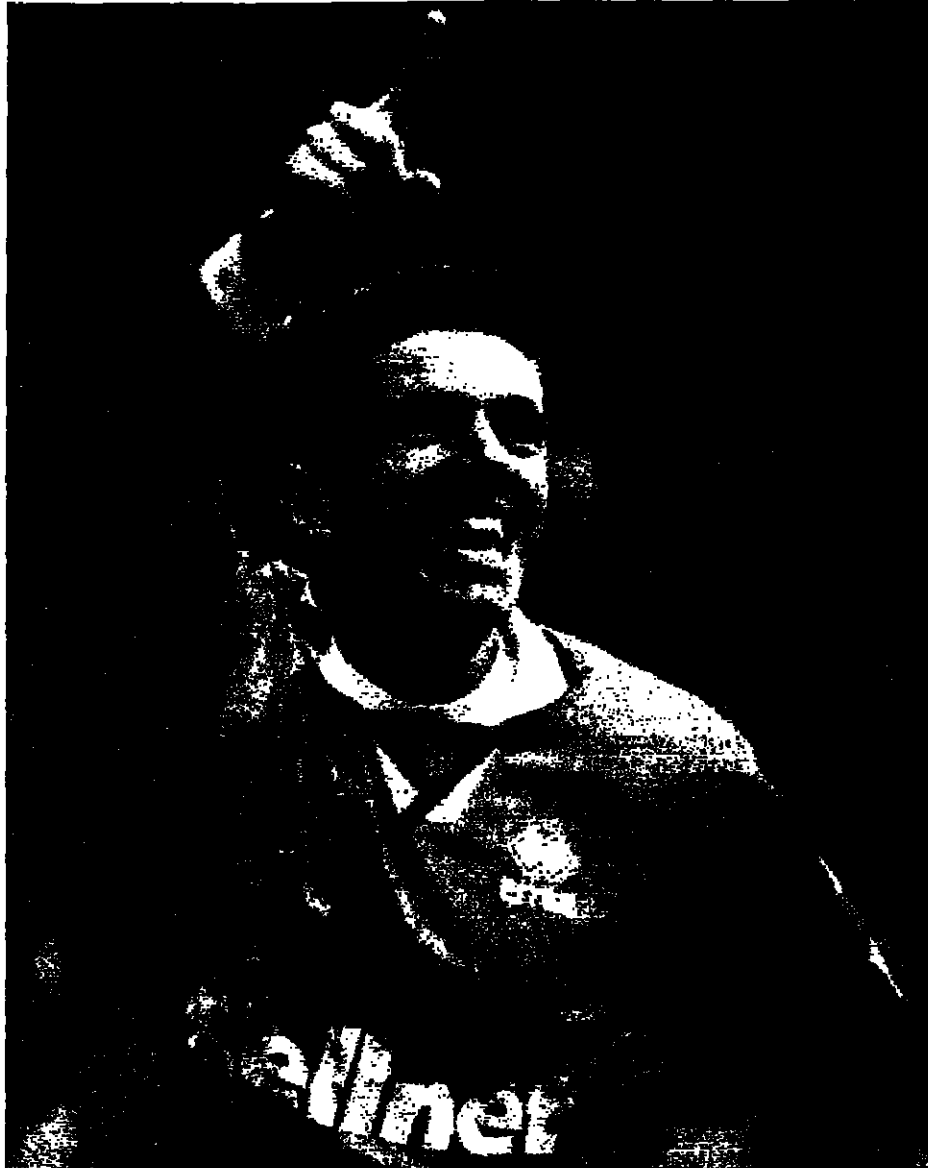
If Middlesbrough are still weighed down by the misery of relegation, then the game will surely be wrested from them by Zola and Hughes, one of only five post-war players to compete in five finals.

Zola, who was presented with the Football Writers' Association player of the year award in London on Thursday night, has excelled in his first season in England and has formed such a formidable partnership with Hughes that Gianluca Vialli has been rooted to the bench for much of the season, reduced to begging to be allowed just five minutes on the pitch at Wembley today.

It was Zola's bravura goal, a sweet turn and unstoppable shot, that proved the highlight of Chelsea's semi-final victory over Wimbledon.

With that attack complemented by the guile of di Matteo and the consistency of Wise and Petrescu on the flanks and the fine passing of Leboeuf from defence, Chelsea should be the stronger side. Gullit, though, dismissed all talk of them being favourites yesterday.

"I don't think we are favourites much," Gullit said. "We are only confident about our possibilities and



Juninho, left, and Zola, of Middlesbrough and Chelsea respectively, both hope to make the match-winning contribution to the FA Cup Final at Wembley this afternoon



PHOTOGRAPHS: OWEN HUMPHREYS AND GARY M. PRIOR

Last duty payable on imports

By DAVID MADDOCK

TWO issues dominated in the Middlesbrough camp yesterday as they made preparations for the 116th FA Cup Final against Chelsea at Wembley today. The question of who would play was followed quickly by where those players would be performing next season.

Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, confirmed that Fabrizio Ravanelli had, predictably, recovered from a knee injury that prevented him from taking part in the game at Leeds United last Sunday that saw his side relegated.

Also a definite starter is Emerson, the Brazilian, whose place had been in doubt for the final after a petulant outburst after being substituted at Elland Road. "We have no problems. Ravanelli has passed his fitness test and will play providing there is no overnight reaction. Emerson will be playing as well," Robson said. "They are a vital

part of the team and I will pick my strongest team."

For both players, this afternoon's contest will surely be their last for Middlesbrough, barring a replay. Ravanelli is destined for Milan, Internazionale and AC both making £8.5 million offers. Emerson's destination is less sure, but Barcelona will be favoured should Bobby Robson — the Brazilian's former manager at FC Porto — retain his position at the club.

Most fascinating of all is the destination of Juninho. He will leave, that much is cer-

tain, but it could be that he may yet return to the Riverside Stadium.

Steve Gibson, the Middlesbrough chairman, has quietly circulated the notion that Juninho could go abroad on a season-long loan to, say, Spain, and then return should the Teesside club be immediately promoted back into the FA Cup Final. "It is a prospect that intrigues Juninho, whose heart really is with Middlesbrough."

"It would be very interesting for me to stay in England, I like English football and my

heart is here. It is something that I will have to think carefully about," Juninho said. "I need to be in the centre of things and I will have to think about it."

He could remain in England, but not with Middlesbrough. Manchester United have made a firm move and yesterday suggested that they have funds available to match the £8 million offered for Juninho by Atletico Madrid.

United, however, may not have things their own way. Juninho is a keen admirer of Liverpool and close friends suggest that if he is to choose England over Spain, then he may move to Merseyside.

Robson's mind was concentrated by continuing fears over the fitness of Ben Roberts, his only available goalkeeper. Roberts has a shoulder problem, but Robson is convinced that he will be fit.

Meanwhile, Real Zaragoza, of Spain, are reported to have made a £6 million bid for Eric Cantona, the Manchester United captain.

Hoddle calls up Eadie

DARREN EADIE, the Norwich City forward, has been enlisted by Glenn Hoddle for England's hectic summer programme. Eadie, 21, received the call yesterday after the England coach was forced to count Paul Merson out of the equation.

Merson lasted only seven minutes of Arsenal's final FA

Cup game at Derby County on Sunday after damaging a tibia. Eadie will join the senior squad for the first time and Hoddle said: "Darren will be training with the senior squad next week ahead of the match with South Africa and will also be coming out with us to Poland."

England prepare to pick both Hollioakes

By ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT

ENGLAND'S cricket selectors may be about to stun us all. Of habit and inclination, the breed has been strictly conservative, but the latest, unusual panel will this weekend contemplate a switch to new liberal by choosing a raw teenager for his international debut before he has even claimed an unchallenged place in his county side.

The name is Hollioakes. Not Adam, who will be automatically included when the party for the three Texaco Trophy one-day internationals against Australia is named tomorrow,

but his younger brother, Ben, who is only 19 and has just a handful of senior appearances behind him.

He would be entirely right for the moment, underlining the message that England need no longer genuflect to custom and that age — or youth — is no barrier to swift advancement. Ben Hollioakes has made a vivid impression in a very brief time. His plain figures may not be staggering, but there is something about him that transmits a special talent and a sturdy temperament. The first might not be sufficient; the two together should be decisive, for this is not a vulnerable boy likely to wilt under Australian atten-

tions. The younger Hollioakes was born, like his brother, in Melbourne and adapted impressively to representative cricket when chosen for The Rest against England A last month.

His subsequent versatility for Surrey, including the making of forthright runs when promoted to the pinch-hitting role, should have cured any selectorial cold feet.

Adam's stronger suit is batting, but Ben's is seam bowling, which, again, ought to suit England. Ironically, though, his dramatic elevation will depend to some extent on the selectors' attitude towards another of his Surrey teammates, the endlessly mercurial

Chris Lewis, who seemed highly unlikely to reappear at this level after being summarily dropped from a Texaco series last August for turning up late on a Test match day. There is a case for saying he

deserves no more reprieves, but, not for the first time, he has begun a season well and the selectors are tempted to forgive and forget once more, if only for the particular demands of the coming week. The downside — and here we

go again — is that Lewis is already injured. He has missed all Surrey's cricket this week through a neck strain and although David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, has spoken to the player, England would be taking even more of a risk than usual by including him.

They have two options. Either pick Ben Hollioakes above Lewis, which is the course of action I would propose, or select them both in a party expanded to 15, which is more likely to be the outcome. If so, Lewis should consider himself privileged.

Now that Nick Knight has resumed fitness and a semblance of form, he will surely

open the innings with the captain, Michael Atherton, blocking a possible recall for Alistair Brown. Two more Surrey men, Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe, will be in the middle-order, along with Graham Lloyd.

As Graeme Hick's only significant score has come in the Parks and neither John Crawley nor Nasser Hussain are regarded as one-day material, the final batting place should concern Chris Adams and Mark Ramprakash. The choice is between a romantic return to a fatally-flawed talent and the pragmatic promotion of an ambitious and frustrated man. Ramprakash might just flower in instant

cricket, given no time to dwell on the consequences of failure, but Adams deserves a chance. Among the seam bowlers, Darren Gough and Dean Headley seem certain; but it may be deemed wise to reserve Andy Caddick for Test cricket. Phil DeFreitas's compelling form should just edge out Peter Martin for the vacant place.

A second spinner will be included to support Robert Croft and Ashley Giles could be preferred to Richard Stump. My party would be: Atherton, Knight, Stewart, Adams, Thorpe, Lloyd, Elham, A Hollioakes, B Hollioakes, Gough, Headley, DeFreitas, Croft, Giles.

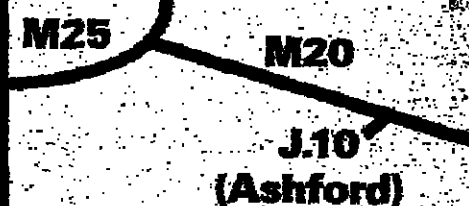
ON MONDAY



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SATURDAY MAY 17 1997

The first all-woman expedition to the North Pole is about to plant the flag. Ginny Dougary flew out to meet them



Above, left to right: team-mates Caroline Hamilton, Zoe Hudson, Lucy Roberts and Pam Oliver pit themselves against the icy blast and point the compass north. Below, Ginny Dougary (right) settles in with the party for a pasta supper

Girls' own adventure

You haven't lived until you've had a pee out in the Arctic," says Zoe Hudson, setting the tone for our long night in broad daylight on the ice. Whatever the private fears of Penguin Echo, the last team of the first all-woman expedition to the North Pole — or, perhaps, because of them — the conversation is resolutely sunny and relentlessly lavatorial.

Forget lyrical rhapsodies on the crystalline beauty of the icescape — which might be appropriate considering our "camp site" is a sort of natural sculpture gallery, the snow whipped and frozen into the most fantastic, tilting shapes — this is *Loaded* for girls.

But my tent mates are not alone in their pre-occupation with their nether regions. With-out exception, the first question from every woman I have told about my own Arctic adventure has been: "But how will you go to the loo?"

The answer is simple, and as dignified as can be expected in the circumstances. The bright red outer suits have been cunningly customised by the men behind the women on this trip with a zip which runs from the navel, hugging the pelvic region, to the base of the spine. The undergarments, made by Damart, apparently the last word in thermal lingerie, are two pairs of crotchless leggings: a very far cry, I can only imagine, from anything available in Ann Summers.

When you have fought off the urge for as long as is humanly possible, you find the nearest

convenient ice hill, dig a hole, unzip yourself, part the vent and, *voilà*, you have had a minimum-exposure, maximum-comfort pee. The only problem, which naturally I had to encounter, is if your zip jams in the vicinity of your birth canal and some poor soul is obliged to come to your rescue.

By the end of May, if Echo does not falter (the only fear each of the team members admits to harbouring), the five teams which make up the McVitie's Penguin Polar Relay — a mouthful in more ways than one, since the women are obliged to eat four Penguin bars a day in appreciation of their sponsors — will have walked a staggering 400 nautical miles across the shifting sea-ice to reach the geographical North Pole, the fixed point at the top of the world.

The temperature in the tent at base camp, given that we are sitting on a carpet of snow, could almost be described as warm — "toasty", as the women like to say. Dangling above us is a sort of clothes line, to which six pairs of gloves are secured by pegs. During my sleepless hours, when the temperature drops and my face begins to freeze into a grimace, the navy fingers seem to beckon eerily, buffeted by the intermittent gusts of icy wind.

Everything has a place and a



number of functions. A ski holds up the roof of the circular tent, which the team members erect in no time at all. How they will manage in a blizzard is another matter; it's no joke if your tent flies away when you're in -45C conditions. In one corner is a small mountain of ice which has been chipped off a glacier and is used for cooking the evening meal: Alfredo Primavera pasta, which is surprisingly delicious when you are expecting some-

thing hideous, like tinned spam hash. Plastic containers are filled with the boiled ice to be decanted in pans for tomorrow's breakfast, and double as hot water bottles at night.

The expedition coach, Geoff Somers, a Cumbrian with a misleadingly tough exterior who spends his life moving from one expedition to another through the jungle, across the desert, over ice, is coping manfully with this bewildering onslaught of femininity. When

Pam, Lucy, Zoe and Caroline aren't discussing gynaecological and scatological problems, they are assiduously off-setting the whiffy effects of their training with liberal doses of Chanel No 5.

The expedition is the brainchild of Caroline Hamilton, a 33-year-old merchant banker turned film financier. Fellow Echo member Pam Oliver, in her mid-40s, is a partner in her company. Zoe Hudson, a sports physiotherapist (handy

on an expedition) shares a London East End warehouse conversion with Caroline off Brick Lane. Lucy Roberts, a lighting designer who intends to return to journalism after this trip, is the fourth member of the party.

Hamilton was a tom-boyish girl, with three older brothers, brought up by her headmaster father to be fearless and to achieve anything she set out to accomplish. "I've always wanted to be known," she says. "I've always wanted to make a mark."

Two years ago she met Pen Hadow, who runs the Polar Travel Company, and the stories of his Arctic explorations triggered something in her. "Here it is," she thought, "here is my opportunity." Together, they came up with the extravagantly ambitious idea of mounting the first all-woman expedition to the North Pole. Hadow has helped to facilitate it, but there is no doubt who has been the driving force. Hamilton's mildly dotty manner belies a muscular determination to get her way, without which the project would doubtless never have got off the ground, let alone on to the sea-ice.

Last September, 65 would-be explorers converged on Dart-

moor for a weekend of rock climbing at night in the driving rain, abseiling, hauling heavy gear over boggy terrain; exercises in SAS-style training to whittle out the women from the girls. The 20 who made it include a Yorkshire mother of baby triplets, a 50-year-old teacher, a mother-and-daughter duo, a great-niece of the Queen Mother, and a student from Buckinghamshire.

The women have spent the last six months training long and hard — as I discover to my cost when I struggle pathetically to keep up with them. All the hours in London gyms and the weekends in the country dragging tyres over moors have honed their bodies into lean survival machines.

I had thought to model myself on Nanook of the North, but end up as Ab Fab in the Arctic. "Honestly, darlings," I want to whimper in Edina-like protest, "can't you tell when someone's had enough?" It is my fault, of course, for foolishly volunteering to get into the spirit of things.

This involves the indignity — only the first of many — of being trussed into a deeply unsexy corset-cum-harness which is connected to a pulk (or sled) bearing, in my case, a trifling 20lb of salt. The pulks of our Arctic heroines, to give you an idea of their strength and stamina, are weighed down with almost four times that load. The team members will have to carry two weeks of supplies, with no food drops, as

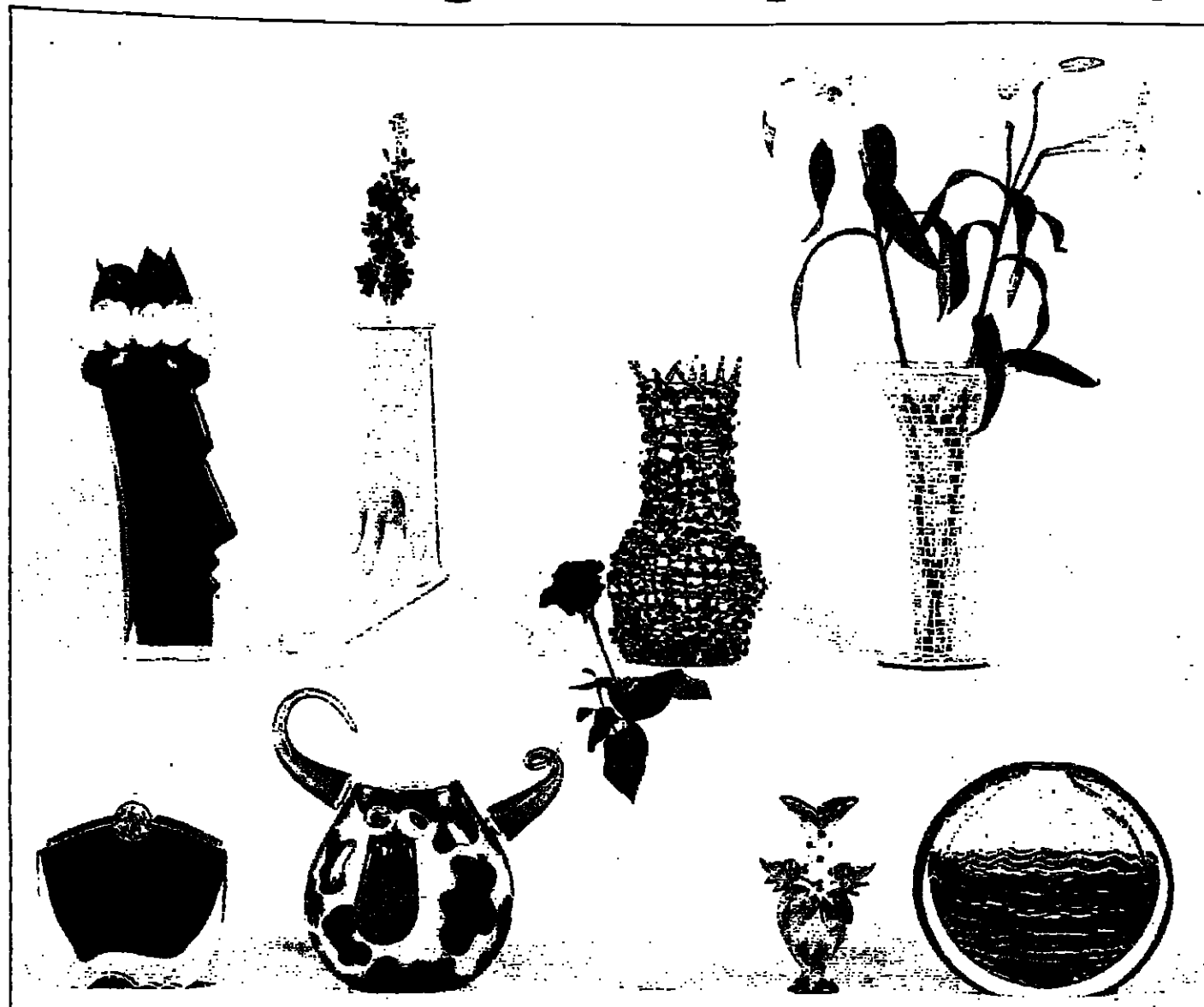
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Simply gilding the lily



So much for subtle vases. These bold, modern designs are positive show-stoppers, says **Sophie Chamier**

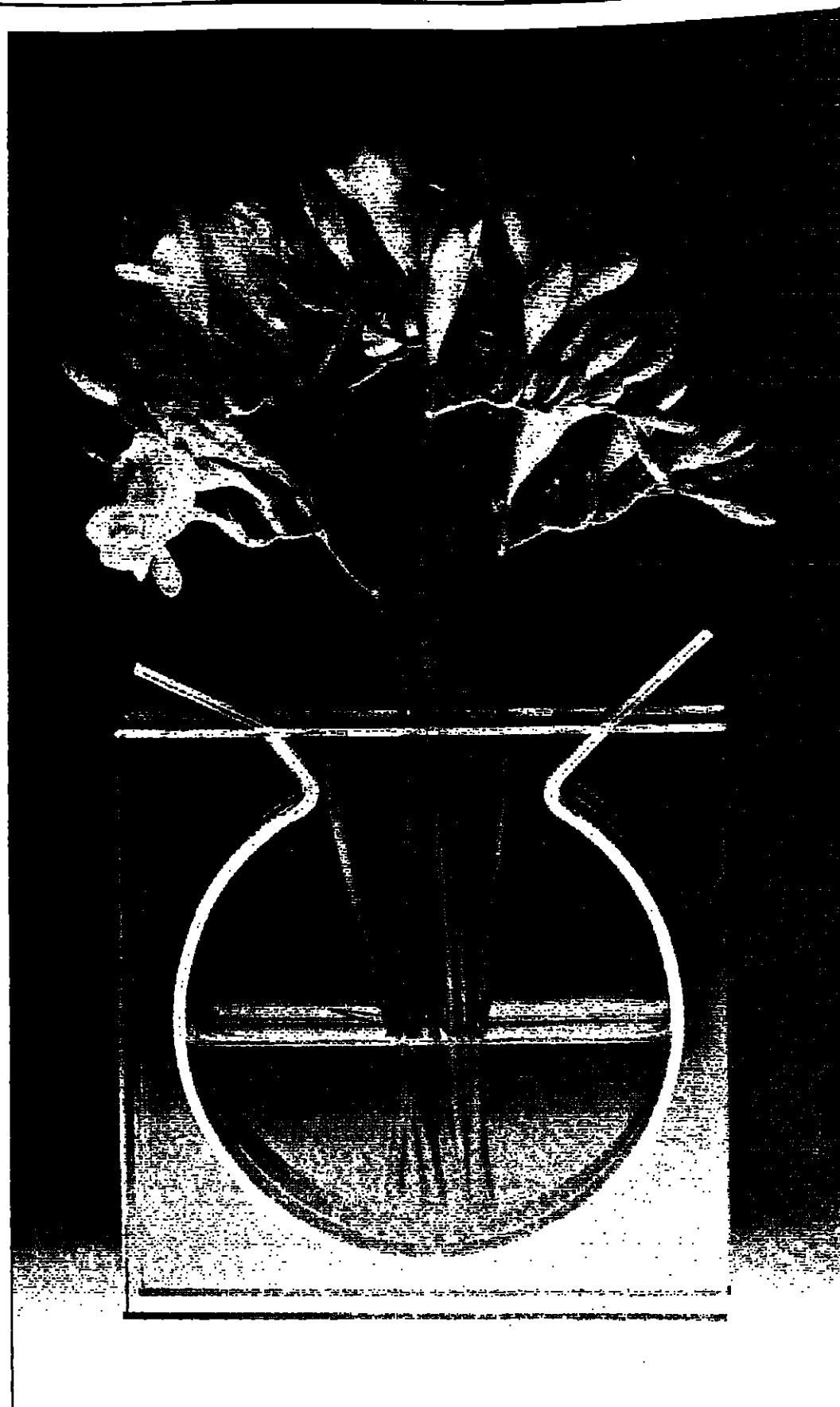
ABOVE, TOP ROW: The Face vase by Christopher Williams, £176, made of mould blown unleaded glass and available in white, red or black, from The Glasshouse (0171-359 8162). Rubber Glove vase £14.95 (£3.50 p&p), from Presents Direct, mail order (0171-371 7017). Beaded vase by Annie Sherburne featuring blue and turquoise antique and modern glass beads, £800, from Contemporary Applied Arts (0171-436 2344). Cream opaque mosaic lily vases, £180, from Liberty (0171-734 1234).

ABOVE, BOTTOM ROW: OzZanie vase in red or blue or clear cased crystal, £570, from Baccarat, 37 Old Bond Street, W1 (0171-408 7767). Mad Cow vase designed by Bob Crooks, in black and white glass with pink tongue, £520 (inc. p&p), from First Glass (0171-622 3322). Erotic

vase, designed by Nigel Coates for Simon Moore, £84. Made of sandblasted leaded glass and available in black or flesh colour, from the Design Museum shop (0171-403 6933). Multi-coloured Little Angel vase, by ceramic designer Jennie Burns, is made of coiled white earthenware with multiple layers of glaze and finished with lustres including gold and mother-of-pearl, £80 (inc. p&p) (01420 472247). Polychrome crystal vase with blue, green and red bands, designed by Bent Johansson for Venetian glass makers, Salviati, £675, to order through Thomas Goode (0171-499 2823).

LEFT: The Barbed Wire Vase in full lead crystal, £180 (inc. p&p), from Columbia Glassworks (0171-613 5155).

● Robert Crampton's *Serious Shopping* returns next week



ABOVE: Ribbon vase from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, £34.95 (£3.50 p&p). Available from Presents Direct mail order (0171-371 7017). Photographs by Des Jensen. Styling by Caroline Griffiths

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'All your life seems to shrink to this one point'

Continued from page 1
they negotiate their way on
skins across the lumpy, treacherous
tundra towards the Pole.

The atmosphere at The Rookery, the men's den and Operation Headquarters, with fax, phone and Web site, is one of amiable heartiness. Everyone has a soubriquet and a barrel or two to his name. Occasionally, when I begin to lose the plot, I find myself referring to Nobby (Peter Noble-Jones) as Noddy, or Smithy (Mike Ewart-Smith) as Goldy, as Honey or Sweetie. This amnesia may be my strain of Arctic Madness, the condition that locals lampoon during the "silly season" when "the Crazies" come up to pit themselves against an environment which only the Inuit people have the temperament and skills (sadly diminishing) to master all the year round.

The story of the men is as remarkable in its own small way as that of the women. In a role reversal which is as neat as it seems refreshingly effortless, these big sporting chaps, upper-class but without too much bray, have assumed the role of handmaidens: sewing and nurturing instead of hunting and gathering. Smithy, a Coves sailing champion, has proved an able seamstress, navigating his way unflinchingly, with the aid of a sewing machine, through the gussets of 20 women's ski suits.

The community in which the women have landed, like creatures from Mars, is an Inuit hamlet (pop 170) that has its share of the difficulties which, from Australia to North America, beset indigenous peoples attempting to adapt to modern society without losing their own identity.

Base camp is at Resolute Bay, which lies at the tip of Cornwallis Island in the farthest-flung reaches of Canada's far north. It began life as a weather station and, in the 1950s, the Canadian Government planted the Inuit colony in a ramshackle sprawl of flimsy-looking houses to protect Canada's rights over the land in the High Arctic. A nomadic people, the Inuit have been persuaded to settle into a lifestyle which has effectively left them stranded between two cultures.



Three and a half miles away is the "other" Resolute: a base of about 65 permanent "southerners" who work for the Polar Shelf scientific research project or one of the local air services. As winter turns to spring, and five months of death-like darkness give way to the endless day, there is an additional fluctuating population of explorers, wealthy tourists, trophy hunters and engineers en route for the mines and rigs scattered across the northern wastes.

Rupert Pendrill Hadow — Polar Pen, as he is known to his friends — has the name, the pedigree and the dashing good looks of a Mills and Boon hero, but with a disconcertingly modern, even feminist twist. I am fortunate enough to have him as a guide — my own personal polar explorer — during a day of my stay at Resolute. And what a day.

"I can't see any white," Hadow says, gesturing all around us. "Show me some white." It is true that the longer you are out on the ice, the more your eye becomes accustomed to seeing. So what at first you think is a blanket white uniformity is, in fact, a shimmering range of pastels and creams which alters according to the time of day and what you can guess is night because of the cold kicking in and subtle changes in light.

At midnight, for instance, the huge blood-orange sun, which sits briefly on the horizon, seems to drip its rosy colour over the ice or heat it from underneath so that it glows baby-blue or candy-floss pink like the colours in a fairytale.

Flying into Resolute over what looked like the dunes of a beach and then the churning spume of the sea frozen in mid-crest — a vision of nature in

chilly, arrested motion — made one think of the wicked Snow Queen in Narnia waving her wand and proclaiming that, henceforth, it will be forever winter in the lands of the High Arctic.

The imagination is too small a thing to contain such beauty. Even as your heart is bursting with delight, as you pick out a shining blade of turquoise ice in the distance or marvel at the optic fibres and delicate glass-like slivers under foot, you are already mourning its loss. The majestic sweep of it is reduced to the small television screen of your mind's eye. It looks like the moon, you say. It looks like the Sahara. And when you hear absolute silence it does not deafen, but seems to contain sounds which do not exist.

At one point, when we have skidded into the depths of a vast ravine, Hadow leaves me on my own to my thoughts. I feel as though a layer of skin has been flayed away. It is like being in the most beautiful cathedral with a divine choir, and all my life seems to shrink to this one point and this one place, as though nothing be-

fore existed. I am not the only one in our party, I find out later, to be reduced to tears by such an overwhelming experience.

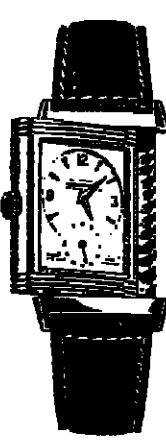
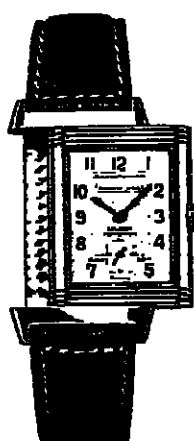
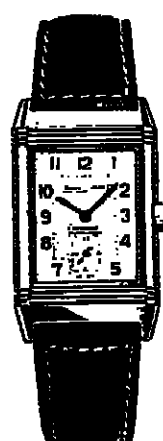
Hadow is committed to wresting this territory away from the "hairy-bottomed machismo" of the male adventurer. "Women have been psyched out of thinking they can or should attempt to do things in the polar region," he says. "Unfortunately, the Ran Fienness mode of exploration — blood and blisters, pain and crucifixion — is what sells books."

He also believes that there has been some investment in creating a pedestal — a temple to the heroic male ideal — to prolong the notion that polar travel is out of bounds for the merely mortal, particularly if she is female.

On my last day with the women, we hire a Twin-Orter and fly to Beechey Island, an hour or so east of Resolute. We land in a God-forsaken place which chills the soul: a vast, flat expanse framed on three sides by great cliffs, the black ridges emerging from their white coating. In the distance are four tiny crosses of bleached wood bearing the names of the young men in their thirties who died searching for Sir John Franklin, who led an expedition to Cornwallis Island in 1845. Nothing else remains. His body was never found. But he and the British men who came to look for him, and met their own deaths in this lonely terrible desolation, opened up the North-West Passage for the next generation of explorers.

As we walk back to the plane, the wind beating the snow into flurries which burn our cheeks, Caroline Hamilton looks serious for the first time on our trip. She mutters, half-silenced by the enormity of the thought and its implications. "What an awful place to die."

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A little light wrapping

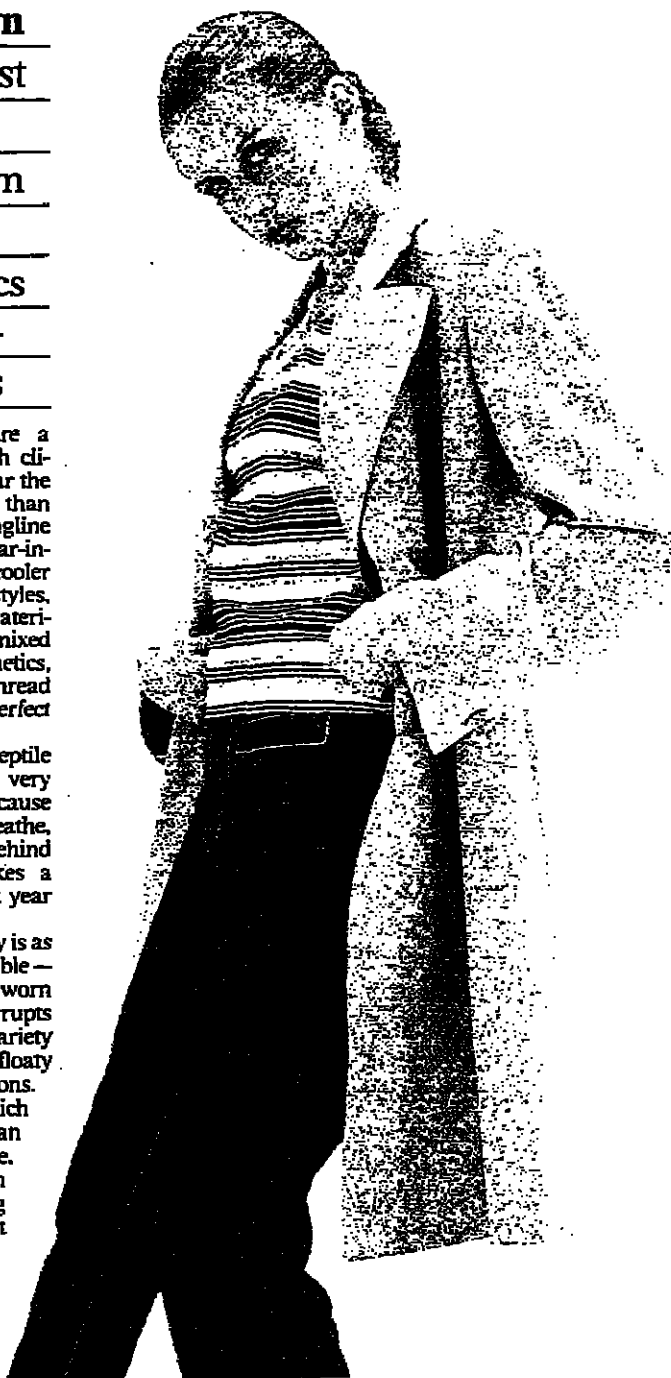
Heath Brown
selects the best
coats for
summer, from
super-soft,
unbelted macs
to Crombie-
style jackets

Summer coats are a must in a British climate and this year the selection is better than ever. Super-soft macs, longline jackets and menswear-inspired looks are all in cooler versions of last season's styles, and many are in new materials. Natural fibres are mixed with breathable synthetics, and highly spun, fine-thread wools are woven into perfect summer fabrics.

Faux leather and reptile skin coats have become very popular, particularly because the new fabric can breathe, and they won't be left behind when real leather makes a big impact over the next year or so.

The look for coats today is as simple and clean as possible — so macs should not be worn belted, because this interrupts the clean line — with a variety of lengths from soft, floaty maxi coats to tight blousons.

The Crombie-style, which comes from the Edwardian frock coat, is a favourite, and without too much shaping and tailoring makes you look taller. It can be worn with a pair of tailored trousers or a simple skirt and matching shell-top, or choose tighter fitting tops and shirts.



ABOVE: Light blue double-breasted coat, £530, Marni, Dickens & Jones, W1 (0171-734 7070); striped vest, £14, and blue cotton jeans, £39.99, both Pepe, branches nationwide (0171-836 8666)

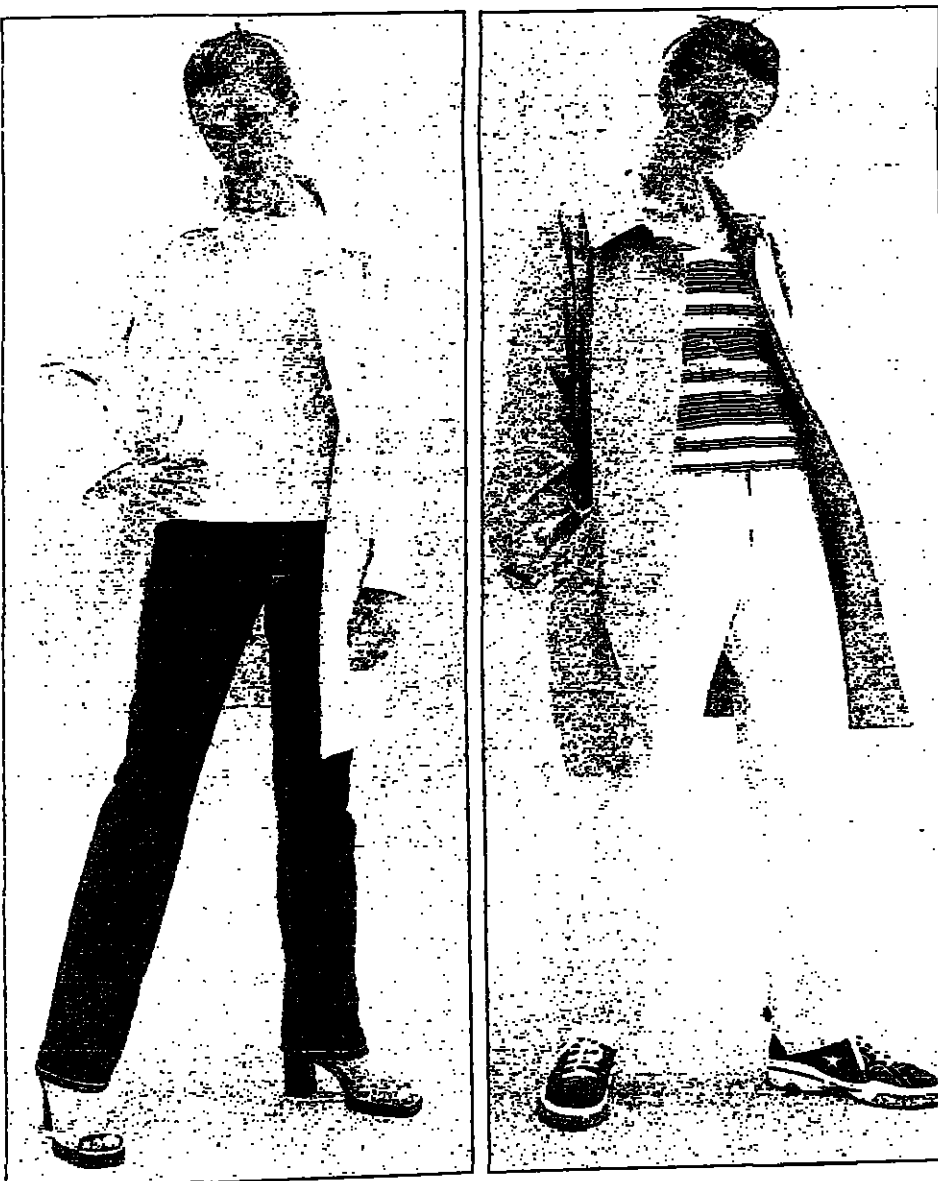


ABOVE: Black PVC coat, £60, Warehouse, branches nationwide (0171-278 3491); cream fitted top, £32.99, and ivory-button fly trousers, £49.99, both from Pepe, branches nationwide (0171-836 8666)

FAR LEFT: Pale lilac coat, £69.99, and matching shell top, £32.50, both from La Redoute, mail order (0500 777777); blue cotton white-stitch jeans, £39.99, from Pepe (as before); beige open-toe sandals, £59.95, Bertie, selected branches nationwide (0171-935 2002)

LEFT: Pale yellow mac, £265, Scotch House, 2 Brompton Road, SW1 (0171-581 2151); striped vest, £14, Pepe (as before); ecru cotton trousers, £34, Gap, branches nationwide (0800 427789); navy and white trainers, £39.95, Converse, Office, 57 Neal Street, WC2 (0181-638 4447)

Photographs: Richard Burns
Hair and make-up:
Sally Kvalheim for Jo Hansford
(0171-495 7774)
Styling: Amandip Uppal



THREE OF A KIND

SIMPLE coloured raffia shoppers make a useful holiday holdall — for beach or sightseeing. H.B.

BELOW: Olive green handbag, £24.95, from DKNY, 27 Old Bond Street, W1 (0171-499 8089); Harrods, Knightsbridge, SW1 (0171-730 1234)



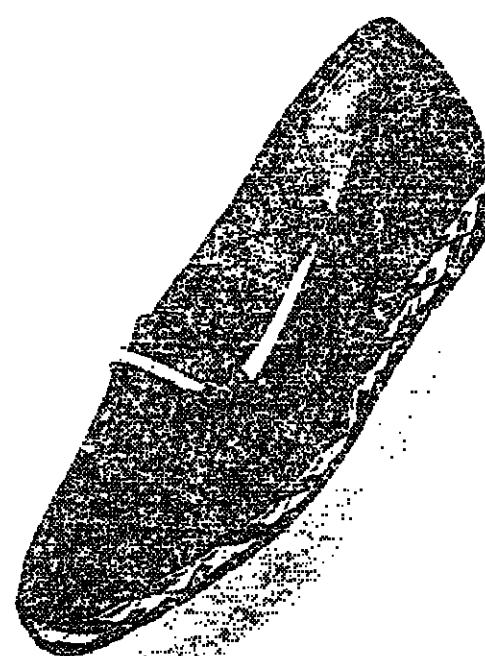
ABOVE: Orange basket, £14.99, Ravel, branches nationwide (0171-631 0224)



RIGHT: Blue shoulderbag, £13, Wallis, branches nationwide (0181-910 3333)

B

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the Sun"). These have an onion aroma, but delicate blue or purple flowers, a little like extended blue-bells. Asia has given us lily species, but the richest haul comes from southern Africa. Here, in the world's richest plant kingdom, a combination of cold but plentiful winter rainfall and hot, dry summers, has resulted in a bewildering bonanza of bulbs.

Wonderful in the wild, all these species have a huge and growing value as garden plants. As water becomes less readily available, bulbs provide a colourful, luxuriant alternative to those leathery individuals which sit above ground and batten the summer out.

The joy of an English garden and climate is that, with careful selection and timing your planting, you can continue to have a run of bulbs in flower from spring to autumn. Indeed, it would be a simple matter to have something bulbous in bloom every day of the year.

Garden centres usually stock the most commonplace summer bulbs, particularly those which have been intensively hybridised, but if your interests run beyond big, brassy gladioli, buy from a specialist. And, because bulbs could almost have been designed for mail order, a supplier is no further away than the postman.

Rupert Bowly runs a nursery in Surrey which produces nothing, but

A black and white photograph of a garden scene. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured flower, possibly a lily, is in focus. Behind it, there are other plants and foliage, including what appears to be a smaller white flower. The image has a high-contrast, grainy quality.

A Top Ten entrant for July is *Tigridia pavonia*, which grows to 1 ft tall with big, tripartite blooms

THESE ARE ten of the best "dry summer" bulbs. You can still plant them, but for a really good display this year, buy them already started off in pots.

■ **JUNE**
Allium 'Purple Sensation': rich purple drumsticks; grows to about 24 in.
Nectaroscordum siculum: pungent-smelling foliage; 3ft stems topped with nodding green and pink flowers; stems become erect as the seeds ripen.
Ixiolirion tartaricum: curled, grassy foliage with 14in stems of royal blue flowers.

■ **JULY**
Galtonia viridiflora: grey-green foliage; stout, 2in stems carrying clusters of trumpet-shaped pale green flowers; 1½ ft.
Tigridia pavonia: big, almost vulgar, vivid red, orange or yellow tripartite blooms with deep blue centres; 1ft.

■ **AUGUST**
Eremurus robustus: a huge spike which reaches almost 10in before erupting into pink blossoms.
Cyclamen purpurascens: one of the more difficult hardy cyclamen, with intensely fragrant carmine flowers and marbled foliage; plant in semi-shade in limy soil: 4in.


■ **SEPTEMBER**
Gladiolus callianthus (formerly *acidanthus*): fragrant flowers in pure white, each with a maroon centre and suspended in its own little stem from the main flower spike; 2½ ft.
Crocus speciosus: a true crocus — not a colchicum — which flowers without foliage; soft purple blue petals and a vivid orange stigma; 4 in.
Amaryllis belladonna: bold stems emerging without foliage in early autumn, carrying umbels of large, pink and white blooms; 2 ft.

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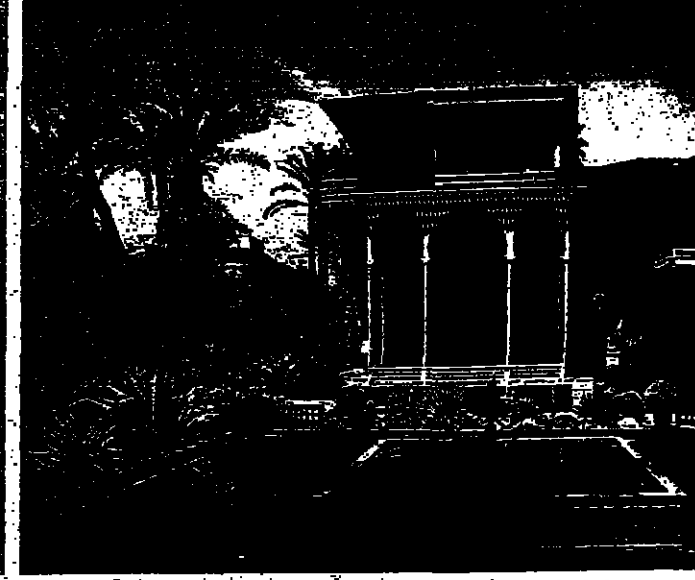
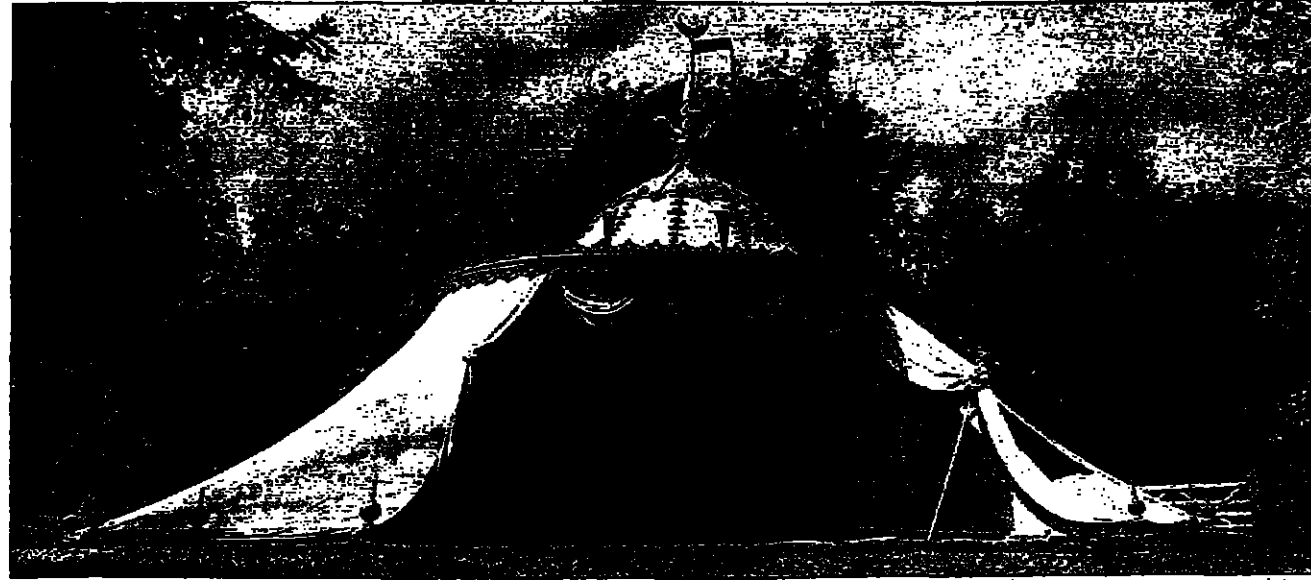
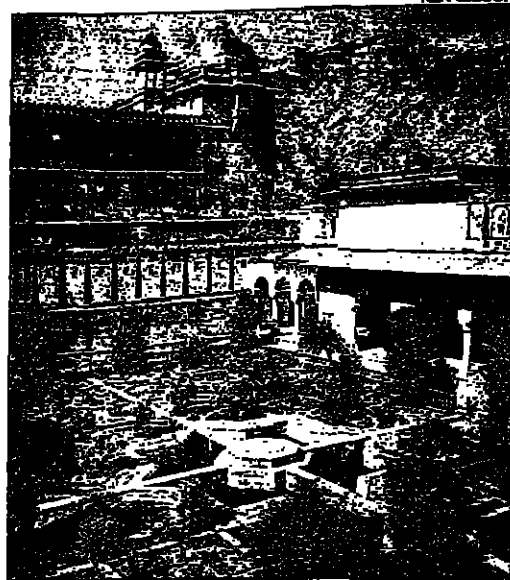
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Chelsea Flower Show: The stories and people behind some of the more unusual highlights to be seen at next week's extravaganza

Far pavilions bring exotic ideas to the big show



The sort of exoticism that inspired displays at the Chelsea show, left to right: the gardens of the Amber Fort, Rajasthan, the Turkish tent at Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey, and Yves Saint Laurent's La Jardin Majorelle in Morocco

The Chelsea show gardens of next week look set to have more than a hint of the exotic, and even the Islamic, about them. After tree houses and temples, we are now heading towards tented pavilions.

Simon Shire's drought-conscious garden for *The Mirror* will concentrate on aromatic plants from the Mediterranean and culminate in a tented pavilion. But in a much more seriously exotic way, Julia Fortescue and Anthony Lockwood have designed a Mogul garden for the Maharaja of Jodhpur (also Rajasthan's Minister of Tourism).

This garden ends in a genuine Rajasthani tented pavilion in turquoise, blue, yellow and cream. It would be quite an eye-opener in rural England.

The Mogul garden has been created to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Indian independence, and it is based closely on old Indian gardens. There is the familiar

central square basin and fountain, with four fountains running away from it to represent the Koran's ingredients of life — milk, honey, wine and water.

Life is big at Chelsea, this year. Age Concern's garden is an allegory of life which kicks off with "a stream of babies' tears". Askham Bryan College's garden earnestly sets out to mingle cultures and philosophies as seen through the elements air, earth, fire and water. Its sunken pool surrounded by a ring of fire should be thoroughly

Mozartian, though the installation of a wind machine to wave carefully chosen clumps of grass could be a trick too far.

Ms Fortescue's idea of using a tent came from a visit to Rajasthan to look at the geometric and intricate gardens in the ancient fortresses. She came across a workshop making fabulously decorated pavilion tents for use in gardens or hired out as marquees

for parties. They ranged from the tiny to the huge. She also met Clarissa Mitchell, an Englishwoman working as a designer at the workshop, and it is she who has designed the details of the fabrics for the Chelsea tent and its interior. All furnishings are hand-made in the Rajasthani workshop and took three months to complete. Ms Mitchell has recently set up a business exporting them to Britain.

The idea of an exotic tent in a garden is not new, even in Britain. Tents, especially with lots of soft furnishings, make a splendid focus in a small garden. In New York a few weeks ago, I noticed below my apartment a small garden in what my host described as "Thai Temple" style, and it had a tented and furnished awning in one corner. Unfortunately it had been given a fly-sheet of polythene to get it through the bad weather.

In the British climate, too, it would be unwise to leave a tent out

'Something tells me that this traditional tented Mogul pavilion from Rajasthan will steal the show'

all winter and expect it to last for years. So it is no surprise that the famous 18th-century Turkish tent at Painshill Park, near Cobham in Surrey, now beautifully restored and gilded, is a solid building underneath its canvas flounces. To banquet in this pavilion would, indeed, be to feast in style. Peel me a grape, Omar!

garden at Chelsea will be simple: four grass plots, the Indian marble fountain and rills between, and a planting of old white roses, narrow cypresses and spindle palms. There will be irises too — not the usual *Iris albicans* seen in Moslem burial grounds but clumps of *I. siberica*. Something tells me the tent will steal the show.

Elsewhere at Chelsea, the New York-based designer Madison Cox has designed a garden for Yves Saint Laurent entitled "Yves — Rapture of the Senses". It is based on Laurent's Jardin Majorelle in Morocco. Here there will be a palette of North African plants, as well as all the usual paradise island regulars — palms, bougainvilleas, agaves and cacti. And water, of course, in its Islamic mode of mosaic fountains and pools.

Behind it all will be, not a blue tent, but tall, cobalt-blue painted walls. But if this sounds hot and intense, the Cesar Manrique

Garden, designed by Peter Styles for Border Stone and Dingle Nurseries, ought to be the hottest spot of all at the show.

Cesar Manrique was an artistic polymath and, until his death in 1992, was the leading artistic light of the Canaries. He worked on his native Lanzarote as artist, sculptor, architect, landscape designer and conservationist, and the garden is to be a celebration of his work as a gardener.

A huge amount of black-purple volcanic lava has been imported to create an impression of a garden on Lanzarote's rocky shore. There will be Canary island plants, such as the ivy *Hedera canariensis*, which we use so much here, the yellow-canary creeper *Tropaeolum canariense* (a South American native which should now be called *T. peregrinum*), the dragon tree *Dracaena Draco*, and, of course, the

palm *Phoenix canariensis*. But there will be plenty of exotics, too, such as bird of paradise flowers, and prickly pears. Bougainvilleas are being imported for the show from Italy, and the prickly pears are from Derbyshire.

Cementing together the rocky outcrops will be "lava flows" of bedded coleus, calceolarias and busy lizzies. It might be exciting, it could be pretty corny, but let's wait and see.

One thing is for sure — with all those exotic gardens at Chelsea next week, some warmth and sunshine are much needed to set them off at their best. Tents are all very well, but camping — however upmarket — in the pouring rain is no fun at all.

STEPHEN ANDERTON

Clarissa Mitchell (Raj Tent Club), 0171-221-4273. Painshill Park, Surrey, is one mile west of Cobham on the A245. Call 01932 86-674 for opening times.

Crafty ways to catch the visitor's eye

A blown-glass garden figure, and sheep sculpted in rabbit wire and steel are among show-stoppers

Old and new, traditional and unusual, stand in opposition at the Chelsea Flower Show. Dramatic new styles sit hedge to hedge with traditional English gardens, but this year's *Country Life* garden has melded old and new, using the work of young craftsmen and designers set in an informal but traditional garden by one of last year's gold medalists, Rupert Golby.

The most striking feature is a geometric glass figure without facial features, hands or feet, seated on an iron bench in a niche thoughtfully contemplating the garden. As the light changes so does the figure, one moment refracting rainbows, the next mirroring the garden and sending sparkles of light across it, then

becoming transparent. What makes this piece especially unusual is that it is made from blown glass. "It was one of the most difficult pieces I have attempted," says the sculptor Johannes von Stumm. "I had to make bigger tools and build a new furnace."

"I have never before exhibited at Chelsea and until recently I only made pieces for the interiors of houses," said Mr von Stumm. "I think that English people are getting more adventurous about sculpture. I always work in glass; it is a solid liquid and it looks good even in snow." His studio is in Wantage, Oxfordshire, but his workshop is in Frome, Somerset, and he plans to bring the Chelsea sculpture, cocooned in blankets, to London in the back of



Lord Linley with his new-look garden chairs and tables

his old van. Anyone with a spare £3,800 can buy one of a limited edition of eight figures. Rupert Till, at 28, is one of the youngest designers contributing to Chelsea. His wire sculptures of animals decorate many gardens on both sides of the Atlantic. "In a way, I make 'garden gnomes' — I make what people want. I started to

make sculptures of dogs from old pheasant pens and then I would work through the night to make them, market them, take them to all the shows."

This year Mr Till has also made a herd of five wire sheep for *Country Life*. "I enjoy the work. The other night there was nothing good on TV so I went to the workshop and made a wire goose," says Mr Till, whose geese sell at £500 each. The herd of sheep can be bought for £5,000. The sculptures are made with strips of rabbit wire welded on to a tough framework of round-bar steel.

Success for Mr Till means he need no longer scrub around for abandoned pheasant pens with which to make his animals; he can afford to buy the materials now.

Another designer new to the garden scene is David Linley, who has been tempted to make his first-ever range of garden furniture, commissioned by *Country Life*. "It was certainly a new challenge," Lord Linley says. "What amused and intrigued me was what lay ahead in the market for garden furniture."

"We had a year to do the commission and so we drew up hundreds of designs, some of them modern. But then I started looking at the garden furniture that people like — traditional furniture like the Lutyns bench — and decided on a traditional but stocky design."

All the furniture is made from English oak, oiled to show off the grain and protect it from the weather. The backs of the chairs have "a great swoosh of plants and flowers and life," represented by a fountain-shaped plume of slats. The legs are fluted and the back of the chairs are raked slightly to make them as comfortable as possible.

What sets this furniture apart is its ample dimensions: the chairs are about 27½ in wide, 40 in high and 25½ in deep. They sell at £2,000 a piece. There are matching dining tables, drinks tables and benches and each piece is stamped with Linley's name.

JANE OWEN

Johannes von Stumm, 01488 636194. Rupert Till, 00 353 454 83648. David Linley, 0171-720 7300.

Great Chelsea bonanza

How you could cash in when the show ends

RAPE AND pillage is how one observer describes it. Heart-breaking says another. "It is terrible on the last day of Chelsea when the gardens are sold off, torn apart and a lot is dumped into skips," says Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall, an award-winning designer.

So that's that then. After hundreds of thousands of pounds has been poured out, months of preparation, a feverish three weeks spent transforming flat playing fields into perfect show gardens, it will all come to an end at 5pm next Friday.

The end-of-show bell is rung and the big sell-off gets underway. "The whole lot disappears out of the gates," says Doug Hammond, contracts manager from Pantiles Nursery in Surrey, suppliers to Chelsea designers.

Visitors will happily buy more than they can feasibly carry home and the Friday evening procession from showground to Sloane Square Underground is a scene straight out of *Macbeth* — Birnam Wood on the move. Many of the plants are hired and not in theory for sale but as showgoers are often keen to buy — such is the cachet of owning a plant that has appeared at Chelsea — if the price is right a sale may be possible.

Most of the gardens have been created just for a few glorious days. *Country Life* and Hiscox Insurance, for example, have splashed out £100,000 on their Centenary Garden and, barring an offer for the whole thing, it will be sold off — everything from bog plants to a limited edition fountain (RRP £8,000).

BUT NOT all gardens meet an undignified end. Charity gardens are often planned with a home in mind. Last year, for example, the Marie Curie garden was moved to one of the charity's hospices, while the Low Allergan garden designed for the National Asthma Campaign opens next month at its new home, Capel Manor in Middlesex.

Julie Toll's 1996 Forest Garden, with its theme of environmental regeneration, has been appropriately replanted next to a new visitor centre in the National Forest in Derbyshire.

This year Help the Aged's garden, designed by Andrea Parsons, will be rebuilt at one of the charity's care homes, Little Bramingham Farm in Luton, while DGAA HomeLife will be transferring its Bird Garden, designed by Bunny Guinness, to its Merlewood nursing home in Surrey.

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TUM0003



Johannes von Stumm in contemplative mood with his glass sculpture, *Reflections*



Rupert Till with his sheep sculptures

- ### WEEKEND TIPS
- Earth-up potatoes and stake peas. Cut shoots of asparagus, except from plants under three years old: sever just below ground level.
 - Pull off unwanted raspberry suckers to give even distribution along the rows and a weedable space in between.
 - Tuck long, new shoots of previously hard-pruned clematis into their supports before they snap or stray elsewhere.
 - Tie in the shoots of climbing roses as they extend.
 - Bedded tulips may be lifted now and replanted elsewhere to die down. Areas for summer bedding should be cleared of spring bedding, forked over and lightly dressed with fertiliser.
 - Watch for and deal with slug damage.
 - May is the best month to apply selective weedkillers on lawns. Choose a fine, still day when the soil is moist.

Although Sherlock Holmes didn't live here, this 'Jacobethan' house would have suited him. Guy Walters investigates

Gothic pile with a mystery air

Many are the houses that claim to be the location for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In Wales, one property — a rather rosy country house hotel — has even renamed itself Baskerville Hall, on the most spurious of grounds. It certainly fits the bill, but not as snugly as 9 Collingham Gardens, London SW5.

Yes, there is the problem that Earl's Court is hardly a fog-shrouded moor and dogs are not allowed in the communal gardens, but one could easily imagine a gaunt butler ushering one up the impressive staircase with a dripping candlestick. Sleep well sir. Don't mind the howling.

The house is in the correct period for Holmes and Watson. Built by Harold Peto in about 1883, the property is in the "Jacobethan" style. It feels minor baronial with its leaded lights, five bedrooms, servants quarters, panelled rooms, vast fireplace, yards of Delft tiles and a downstairs lavatory fit for a visiting maharaja. Nearly all the windows have 16th-century stained glass and there is heraldic stone-work above the front door.

The space is phenomenal for the location. At 4,700 sq ft, one might have expected the house to have been broken down into flats years ago. Luckily, a certain Mrs Dent lived in the house for 60 years until she died in 1984.

When the present owners bought it, the property was like a time capsule from the 1920s. The Survey of London, executed in 1908, describes the house as "amplified fitting a bachelor's requirements but not extravagant". I wish, I am a bachelor, and my one-bedroom flat in Battersea would easily fit into the 470 sq ft drawing room. The house would be extravagant for a bachelor, and at £1.75 million, most bachelors I know would rather buy a river-view penthouse.

This is a house for a family, or a bachelor who needs to keep his girlfriends separate. The owners were away at their other home in Beirut when I visited, and instead the owner's mother, Kay Williams, was summoned from the country to show me around. What makes



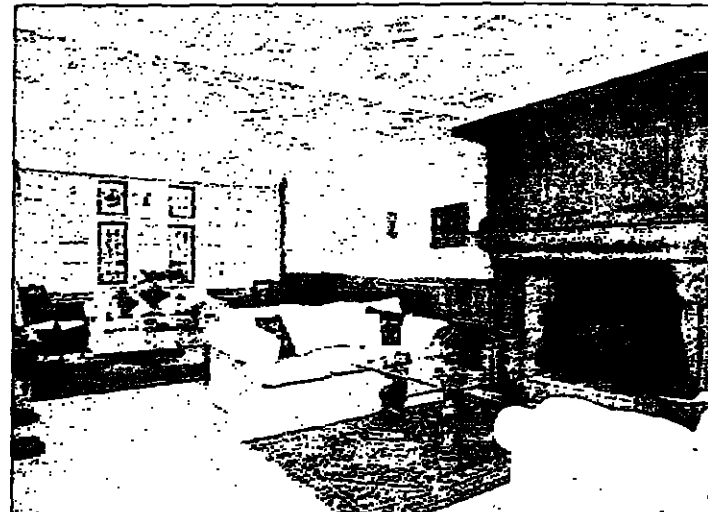
Kay Williams in front of the vast walk-in fireplace in the morning room. The house was described in the Survey of London in 1908 as "amplified fitting a bachelor's requirements but not extravagant"



The ornate carved stone fireplace in the hall

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

● 9 Collingham Gardens, Earl's Court, London SW5. ● Price: £1.75 million. ● Shopping: Earl's Court Road is only a few hundred yards away, with the choice of many excellent takeaways, plus Our Price records and a Waterstone's bookshop. But not far away are High Street Kensington and Fulham Road, with their array of shops and restaurants. There is a huge Sainsbury's a short cab ride away on the Cromwell Road. ● Nightlife: Any owner is unlikely to frequent the gaggle of Australian-dominated pubs nearby, but there are some fine restaurants to be found. ● Access to the country: Turn left halfway up the nearby Warwick Road and you are more or less on the M4



The drawing room could host a drinks party for 50 fat people

used by one of the owner's sons and his girlfriend. A bottle of "Big Hair" conditioner rather gives the game away. No doubt the owners juggled the merits of terrace and drawing room for ages and clothing storage won. Both bedrooms have Delft-tiled fireplaces, and in contrast to the wooden heaviness of the ground floor, are light and airy.

The second floor is ideal for two or three children. If two of them are double enough not to mind sharing. The bedrooms are a good size, and there is a smallish open sitting-room which can be used as a "flop room", as well as a bathroom. However, No 9 has one drawback that might deter many potential purchasers. It has no garden. (Neither is there off-street parking.) There is a patio which is not much bigger than the study, and there is direct access to the communal gardens. But this is a real gripe. If this is to be a family house, or a house for those who love entertaining, then a garden is essential. Perhaps the house would suit a bachelor after all.

● Agent: Knight Frank, 0171-884 4311.

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Leasehold 88 years
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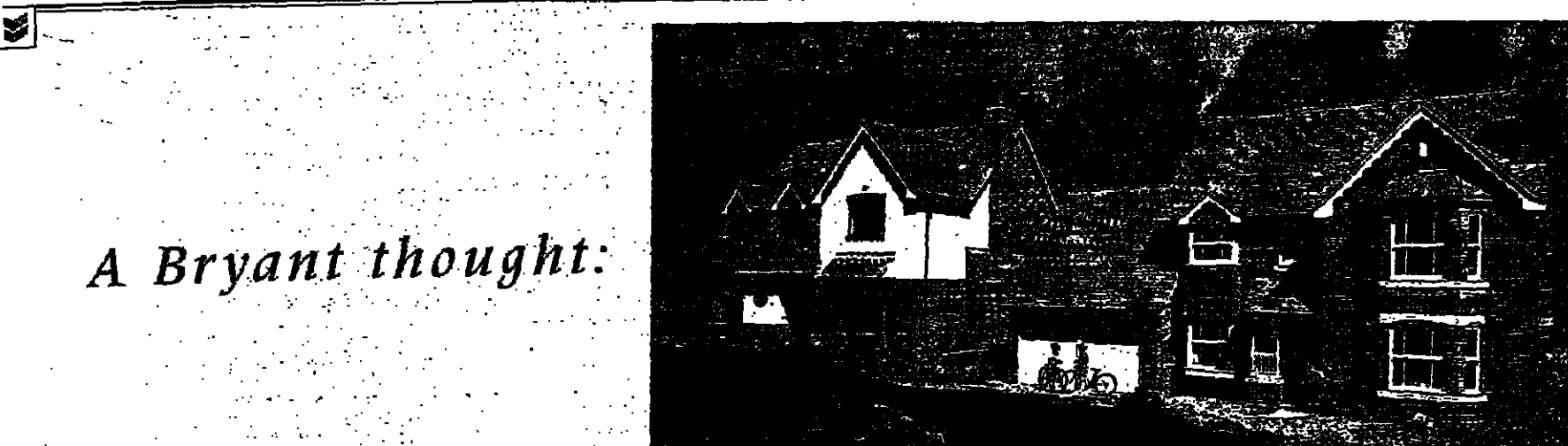
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1st floor maisonette flat with balcony.
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NEW HOMES



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A study in building a library

Books do furnish a room, as the novelist Anthony Powell said. Most lovers of literature dream of a book-lined study, a room that can serve as an oasis of calm and contemplation, lined on all four walls with the collected wit and wisdom of generations of civilisation.

For me, two children and limited space meant that for years it was only a dream. Meanwhile, the books accumulated in vast numbers. Shelves were constructed in the hall and every bedroom had a bookcase, but still boxes of them had to be consigned to the attic. Then we moved to a larger house and found that there was one vacant room on the ground-floor plan.

Inquiries to local tradesmen suggested that to build book racks from floor to ceiling would cost about £8,000. So I resolved to build the study myself. It was a bold decision,

Without even an O level in woodwork, Nigel Williamson built a room for his books in grand style

because my only relevant experience was a solitary term's woodwork when I was 11. This had produced a teapot stand that wobbled alarmingly, because the dovetail joints failed to dovetail.

My research consisted not of reading DIY manuals but of visiting the National Trust properties at Chartwell in Kent and Batemans in Sussex, and making a study of the extensive libraries of Churchill and Kipling. While other visitors examined the titles that had inspired the great men, I was busy inspecting the carpentry and calculating the length, width and depth of the shelves. My room was somewhat smaller and scaling-down was necessary but, if you are going to use a model, I decided to make it a grand one.

The plan that was eventually formulated was simplicity itself: eight rows of books between floor and ceiling, shelves individually bracketed to the wall and upright planks fixed with nails and screws at intervals of three feet. Anything longer and you risk shelves sagging in the middle under the weight. A deeper bottom shelf, jutting out an additional eight inches, created an extra surface for treasured objects such as the whisky decanter — another idea borrowed from the library at Chartwell.

I built shelves around the door frame, creating an impressive boxed-in effect that surpassed the picture in even my most optimistic mind's eye. The light switch was accommodated with an open shelf. There was a difficult moment when I came to the first corner, but a simple piece of panelling safely negotiated that potential hazard. The problem of toppling and falling the stacks was resolved by using lengths of skirting board — cheap but effective. Al-



Nigel Williamson in the library he built in a spare room. "It now contains almost 4,000 volumes"

though there was a lot of sawing of timber, the best news was that there was no need to re-live the horrors of the school woodwork room, because no proper joints were required.

After six weekends of hard labour and £500 worth of timber and materials, the room was surrounded by almost 300 feet of pine shelving. The wood looked far too bright and new but two coats of a mahogany stain transformed it into something with which Kipling or Churchill would have been more comfortable.

Unfortunately, when the books were added (of course, there still wasn't room for them all, so the bookcases remain in the bedrooms) they emphasised the fact that one or two shelves — all right, half a dozen — were not in perfect alignment. It was only a case of a millimetre or so, but it showed. Adding lengths of a wooden moulding to the edges of the shelves disguised the imperfections and enhanced the stylishness.

The study now contains almost 4,000 volumes arranged in my own

idiosyncratic system. Since it was finished I have been on a guided tour of the much-maligned new British Library at St Pancras in central London. I thought it was magnificent and, in retrospect, I might have incorporated a few ideas. But perhaps those of us without even a woodwork O level should not get over-ambitious.

I furnished my room in the way I had always dreamt. Since doing so I have hardly spent a waking moment in the rest of the house.

PROPERTY NEWS

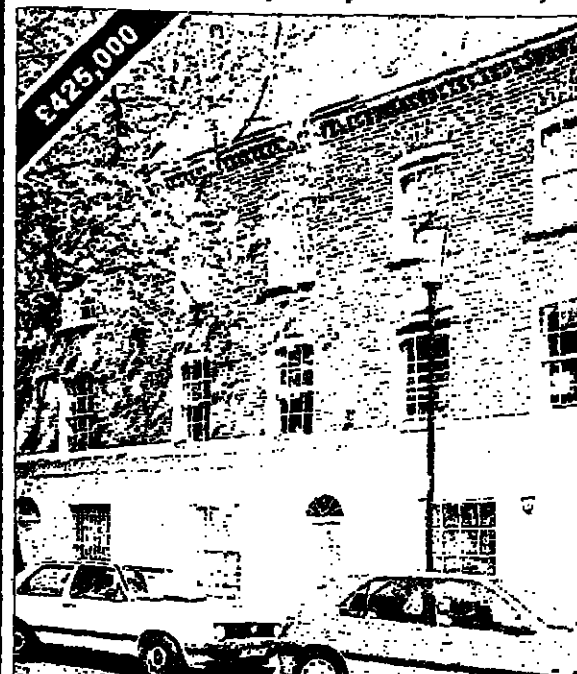
■ **THE 318-acre** Edwinstow Estate in Herefordshire, home to a 50lb salmon christened Big Mamma after spawning a record five times, is for sale. *Amanda Loose writes.* The estate, with about four miles of double bank fishing on the River Cothi, includes a former Grade II listed mansion. Price: £700,000. Contact: Knight Frank on 01432 273067.

■ **THE prime London market** will continue to flourish this year, according to Hamptons International. Despite average rises of 12.4 per cent in the first quarter of 1997, it expects overall increases of up to 25 per cent for some properties this year.

■ **GRADE II listed 38** Sheffield Terrace, in Kensington, west London, is for sale. Designed by Alfred Waterhouse, who designed the V&A, the 1876 house has a garden flat and two self-contained maisonettes. Price: £2.5 million. Contact: Aylesford on 0171 351 2383.

HOMESWAP

What the same money will buy around the country



This four-bedroom Victorian terraced house for modernisation, with a bay window and roof terrace, in Jamieson Street, Kensington, west London, will set you back £425,000 (John D. Wood, 0171 727 0705)



In Cornwall, £425,000 would stretch to this Grade II listed eight-bedroom manor house in 8.55 acres of garden and woodland, with views across Penzance to the sea. Rosehill Manor also comes with six self-contained flats, a swimming pool and tennis court (Knight Frank, 01392 423111)



For a little less (£400,000) you could buy Cropwicks, a 17th-century Grade II listed five-bedroom country house in 20 acres of landscaped gardens and paddocks, at Hailow Down, East Sussex. It also has a range of traditional farm buildings, including a Sussex barn and all-weather tennis court (Sirtz & Porter, 01273 475411)

CHERYL TAYLOR

Knight Frank INTERNATIONAL



Chelsea, SW3

Markham Square

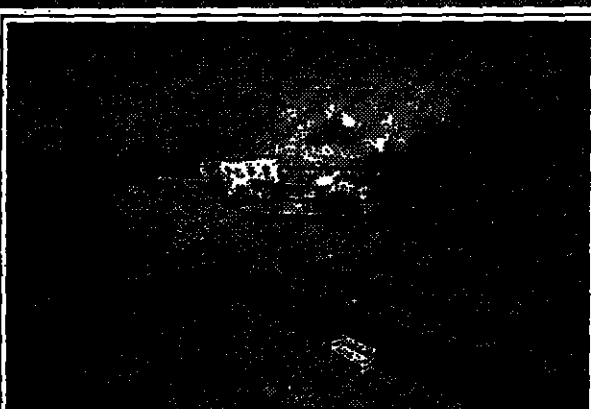
A delightful freehold family house, located in this attractive garden square within walking distance of Sloane Square

2 reception rooms, conservatory, 2 cloakrooms, master bedroom with en suite bathroom, 4 further bedrooms, bathroom, shower room, family room/bedroom 6. Patio

Freehold £1,200,000

Apply: Sloane Street 0171 824 8171

(N6/134248)



Wiltshire

Aldbourne 2 miles. Marlborough 6 miles. Swindon 9 miles. (Distances approximate)

A family house located in an outstanding rural position

5 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms. 3 bedroom bungalow. Outbuildings. Swimming pool. Tennis court. Outstanding gardens and grounds.

In all about 12 acres (4.85 hectares)

Joint Agents: Windsor Clive International, Marlborough (01672) 521155

Knight Frank, Hungerford (01488) 682726

(N62/133319)



Buckinghamshire

High Wycombe 3 miles. M40 4 miles. Central London 35 miles. (Distances approximate)

A wonderful Georgian and Queen Anne Grade II house of 6,463 sq. ft., currently used as office headquarters

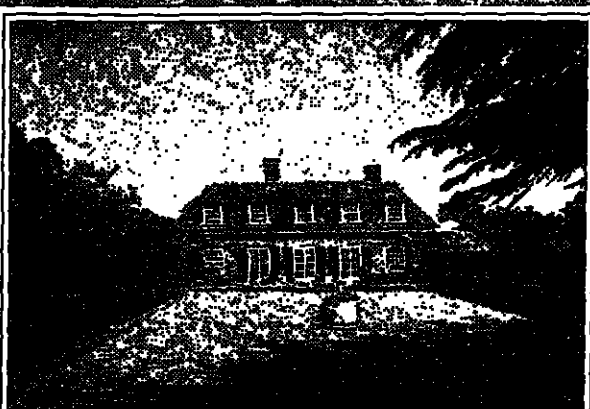
Entrance hall, 6 reception rooms, 8 bedrooms. Outbuildings, walled gardens. Heated swimming pool and hard tennis court.

In all about 5 acres (2.02 hectares)

Joint Agents: Edwin Hill, Windsor (01753) 689000

Knight Frank, Beaconsfield (01494) 675368 or London 0171 629 8171

(AR/25/126769)



Buckinghamshire

Higher Denham 1 mile (Marylebone 25 minutes). Central London 21 miles. M25 (J16) 48 miles. (Distances and times approximate)

An elegant country house overlooking Denham Golf Course

Entrance hall, 4 reception rooms, conservatory, 2 bedroom suites, 5 further bedrooms, 2 further bathrooms. Self-contained annexe. Swimming pool, summer house. Gothic folly. Garaging. Outbuildings. Formal gardens.

In all about 8½ acres (3.36 hectares) (As a whole or in 2 lots)

Apply: Beaconsfield (01494) 675368 or London 0171 629 8171

(17B/AC/129444)



Kensington, W8

Phillimore Court

A light and spacious 3rd floor 3 bedroom flat within easy reach of Kensington High Street

Double reception room, kitchen/breakfast room, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms (1 en suite). Communal central heating and hot water. Porter. Lift.

Leasehold 115 years £480,000

Apply: Kensington 0171 938 4311

(ED/130133)



Oxfordshire

Abingdon 3 miles. Oxford 7 miles. Didcot (Paddington 40 minutes) 10 miles. (Distances and times approximate)

A substantial family house in a mature private setting

Entrance hall, 3 reception rooms, kitchen/breakfast room, 6 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. Detached garage block, outdoor heated swimming pool, gardens and grounds.

In all about 2½ acres (1.01 hectares)

Apply: Oxford (01865) 790077

(MAS/133689)



Jersey

St. Helier about 4 miles. Jersey Airport about 8 miles.

An impressive hilltop house with spectacular panoramic sea views

3 reception rooms, conservatory, kitchen/breakfast room, cellar, master bedroom suite with dressing room/study. 2 guest bedroom suites, 2 further bedrooms, family bathroom. Self-contained staff flat.

Old cadet cottage. Garaging. Lawned gardens.

Joint Agents: Broadland Estates Ltd, St Helier (01534) 880770

Knight Frank, London 0171 629 8171

(17B/4/132766)



South of France

Valbonne 2 km, A8 (m) 9 km. Nice International Airport 23 km (Distances approximate)

A compact family house

Entrance hall, sitting/dining room, tower sitting room, utility room, master bedroom suite, 4 further bedrooms, 3 further bathrooms. Covered terraces. Mature gardens and grounds, double garage.

Swimming pool, pool house.

In all about 9,000m²

Apply: London 0171 629 8171

(17/131871)

If you're trying to buy or sell a house, the choice of solicitor could make all the difference, says Faith Glasgow

Is your lawyer a liability?

Buying and selling property is notoriously stressful. It usually involves an interminable string of phone calls to find out what should be happening, why it isn't and when it will. In a busy market the whole process becomes even more fraught, as buyers feel the hot breath of the competition on their necks and vendors see their own purchases evaporating as the sale is delayed.

But price wrangles, structural hitches and boundary disputes aside, the waiting game is largely a consequence of the legal process of conveyancing — and if you land yourself with an incompetent or overworked lawyer, your interests will suffer, whether you are buying or selling.

Estate agents, traditionally the target of most customers' frustration, are keen to point out the difference that a good — or bad — solicitor can make to a transaction. Colin Forbes, at Chesterfield in London, cites a couple of nightmare examples: "I know of a situation where the buyer's and the vendor's solicitors worked in the same building, yet the deal was being delayed; it turned out that instead of walking up a flight of stairs to exchange correspondence, they were posting letters to each other — second class."

In another instance, a contract race where speed counted for everything, the contract was put in the in-tray of the wrong partner, who was on holiday. By the time the paperwork was located, some one else had bought the house.

Bob Rixon at the Homebuyers' Advisory Service, says: "Solicitors have no sense of urgency. Everything needs to be in writing, so they'll write the letter, then sit back and wait for the reply and it's a question of how long they leave it before they chase it up."

Oonagh Alen-Buckley, a London-based conveyancing solicitor, argues that fax and e-mail are becoming commonplace tools of the

profession but admits that some lawyers are shy of the phone. "When they could make a five-minute call they write a letter and you get it two days later."

Michael Brandon, of Jackson Stops & Staff in Chichester, says: "Speed is of the essence. When someone agrees to buy a place, they have usually got their own under offer at an advanced stage, or else the money is sitting in the bank."

This is all well and good in a straightforward deal, but in a lengthy chain, the process can slow down enormously — no matter how effective your solicitor — simply because of the number of surveyors, agents, lawyers (and buyers and sellers) involved.

Nonetheless, the period between verbal acceptance of an offer and legally binding exchange of contracts is full of danger, so the pressure is on for timescales to shorten. Ms Alen-Buckley says: "There is increasing demand to complete within two to three weeks. If the solicitor is aware of the timescale involved from the outset, he will ensure that the transaction is given priority."

Ivor Dickinson, at the London agent Douglas & Gordon, says buyers and sellers can bring mishaps on themselves by choosing the wrong firm. "It is natural for first-time buyers to instruct the family solicitor. But my heart sinks when I hear that Joe Muggins from Cornwall is acting, because they are not conveyancing specialists and they are not familiar with London. They ask questions which might be relevant for a Cornish estate but are inappropriate for property in London. A locally based specialist will have bought and sold other houses on that street; they'll be dealing with the council regularly; they'll know about quirks in an estate lease and so on."

Deryck Hight, the north west residential director of Black Horse agencies, agrees. "A local solicitor

will know the general timescale for searches, and whether they are running slow; he'll also know, for example, if a mining search is required in the area."

Personal recommendation is one route to a competent solicitor but reputable agents should be able to supply a shortlist of lawyers they deal with regularly and satisfactorily. Sellers — for whom the estate agent is acting — often stick with the firm through which they bought, but David Bedford of Bedfords in East Anglia says that if it is one with which he has had frustrating or inefficient experiences — "and one or two are downright negligent" — he may suggest an alternative. "A local

firm is even more important for buyers," he says, "especially those coming from out of town."

Could this amount to estate agents scratching the backs of their legal chums? "Solicitors don't reward agents for referrals," Mr Dickinson says, "but it's in everyone's interests if we recommend certain firms. They are familiar with us; they look after us because we put business their way, so the deal will go through quickly."

Ms Alen-Buckley says: "The role of the estate agent is seen by more and more solicitors as smoothing the path in the transaction but many agents find dealing with solicitors an uphill struggle. It is often impossible for them to get

through on the phone and their calls are rarely returned. "A good solicitor will be sensitive to the client's need to know what's going on but a good estate agent will know when to leave the ball in the lawyer's court. Again, familiarity can make all the difference."

However, it is a mistake to make finance a priority in selecting a lawyer. Deryck Hight points out that fees vary and while you could pay as little as £175-£200 or as much as £400, "does an extra £50 on your legal bill make much difference if you're getting a good job done? We recommend solicitors with reasonable charges, but most

importantly we know they do a thorough job."

And be warned: paying through the nose does not guarantee top-notch treatment. Mr Dickinson warns against going to large London firms simply because they have familiar names. Not only will you pay over the odds, but you will be a small fish in a big and busy pond. "Have you ever been in a major solicitor's office? Their in-trays can be four feet high and your contract could be at the bottom."

One useful development for solicitors, designed to streamline and speed up the whole process of buying and selling, comes from the Law Society. Known as Trans-Action, it amounts to a comprehensive

package of the deeds and pre-contract inquiries which are prepared at the outset. (A search initiated by the vendor rather than the buyer may also be included when the market is moving briskly, though vendor searches were dropped during the recession when houses were taking a year to sell, as they became out of date.)

According to Neil Gower at the Law Society the idea is that the standardised forms not only contain the basic details needed by the buyer, but also eliminate confusing extraneous information — in other words, that house purchase becomes a formula. "It's already quite widely used, but it will come into its own in a rising market," he says.



FACT FILE

GOOD solicitors will prepare as much paperwork as possible as soon as they are instructed that a property is for sale, so that the contract is ready to go out as soon as an offer has been received. This can save two to three weeks.

■ Sellers: make sure you know where the title deeds are held, so that the solicitor can apply for them. Where a mortgage is involved, you will need the roll number and date of the mortgage.

■ Flat owners should hand over the last three years' service charge accounts, up-to-date ground rent receipt, a copy of the buildings insurance policy and schedule of cover, details of the landlord and managing agents.

■ House and flat owners need to supply information on property alterations or treatments.

■ Be prepared to complete a Seller's Property Information Form, which requests further details about the property.

■ Deal with all paperwork thoroughly and promptly.

■ Buyers: if you are worried about specific issues such as bridewealth or rights of way, let your lawyer know at the outset.

■ If you are buying a property, nominate a spokesperson rather than both independently badgering the solicitor (and agent) for the same information.

■ If time is of the essence, agree a timescale with the other party at the outset — but be prepared to pay your lawyer over the odds for priority treatment.

■ Don't be afraid of your lawyer. At the outset, have him explain what should happen and when; expect to be updated, phone for news if you haven't heard and chivvy if agreed timescales are in danger — but remember, conveyancing is a slow process.

■ If you feel your deal was lost through the negligence of your solicitor, contact the Office for Supervision of Solicitors (01926 620072).

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GLOUCESTERSHIRE, Westonbirt

A charming cottage in a very popular village close to the renowned Westonbirt Arboretum.

2 bedrooms, bathroom, reception room, cloakroom, kitchen, utility room, garden, parking.

Freehold £135,000

CIRENCESTER: 01285 642244

'Now that the political landscape has been settled, let's vote on the real landscape - and elect farmers and landowners every five years'

Up the poll: reform our countryside

If it was said once, it was said a thousand times: "The political landscape of Britain has changed." Fine. Now let's set about the real landscape. Now that we have realised that by voting out the old and electing the new we can boost the mood of the nation overnight, why not apply the same principle to the countryside, also in desperate need of reform and revitalisation?

I have a radical proposal to make: I propose that farmers and landowners should stand for election every five years. If they win, they get their land back. If they lose, it's thank you and goodbye.

Think about it: why should they not be forced to show themselves in public and explain their policies for producing sufficient food, safeguarding the landscape, keeping the balance of nature? And if they fail in their promises, why should they not be kicked out?

For most country dwellers, farmers and landowners wield an influence as powerful as any that comes from Westminster. They are leading employers of local labour, owners of housing, sculptors of the landscape, sole keepers of the wildlife, prime producers of food. Their power over the countryside makes

an ordinary MP seem impotent. What is more, farmers are always moaning that they are misunderstood. Well, let them come out every five years, get on the soapbox on the village green and see if they can convince their own neighbours that they are fit and proper people to be carrying the dual burdens of feeding us, and caring for our countryside.

This idea came to me a few weeks ago travelling along the trunk roads of Britain while the general election campaign was in its crescendo. In our part of arable East Anglia, election posters appeared in the fields like bright blue weeds: an apt description of some of the people they were inviting us to vote for. Nothing wrong with that: in the name of democracy, I too can put a sticker in the kitchen window and a placard by the front gate. The difference is that whereas you can wander around a village, see the signs and know who put them there (why, old Mrs Middleton in the council house is supporting the Monster Raving

Loonies - last time she was all for the Yogi flyers; must be her ankles playing up), the passer-by has no knowledge of the individual who allows posters in the wheat fields - if, indeed, they are individuals: much farmland is owned by "institutions". I could take you to a farm close to here where, if you asked to see the landowner, you'd be directed to Salt Lake City: it is owned by the Mormon Church. There are other farms where, if you wished to complain about mud on the roads at sugar beet lifting time, you would have to catch the train to the City of London and seek out the pension funds. Of course, you would have to turn up with a plump rabbit

DOWN TO EARTH



PAUL HEINEY

wrapped in a newspaper, freshly shot on their own land, to remind them what landowning is all about.

If an elected landownership achieved anything, it would at least flush out the faceless ones so that we could tell them what we think of the way they husband our landscape, and quiz them on their plans for the next five years. Having said this, I sense farmers bridling, the hairs rising on the backs of their necks, their heads lowered like bulls about to charge. Well, before you cut me down with your horns, let me say that in most cases I have no doubt that existing farmers would be returned to their land. Most farmers have a lousy balancing act

to perform between making a living, nodding in the direction of conservation, grappling with the whims of European directives, clearing up the mess picnicers leave in gateways, shutting gates behind thoughtless walkers and dealing with retards who walk unschooled dogs in fields of sheep. To these heroes, I apologise. You have my vote.

But there are others who would not have such an easy time on the hustings. Not far from here, an entire village is living in fear that an incoming landowner is going to grub out hedges which have surrounded the village since medieval times. He has done it before, but they are his hedges and he can do it again if he wants. They cannot stop him. Others, bigger landowners, are planning equally dirty tricks, such as selling beloved views for super-markets or gravel pits.

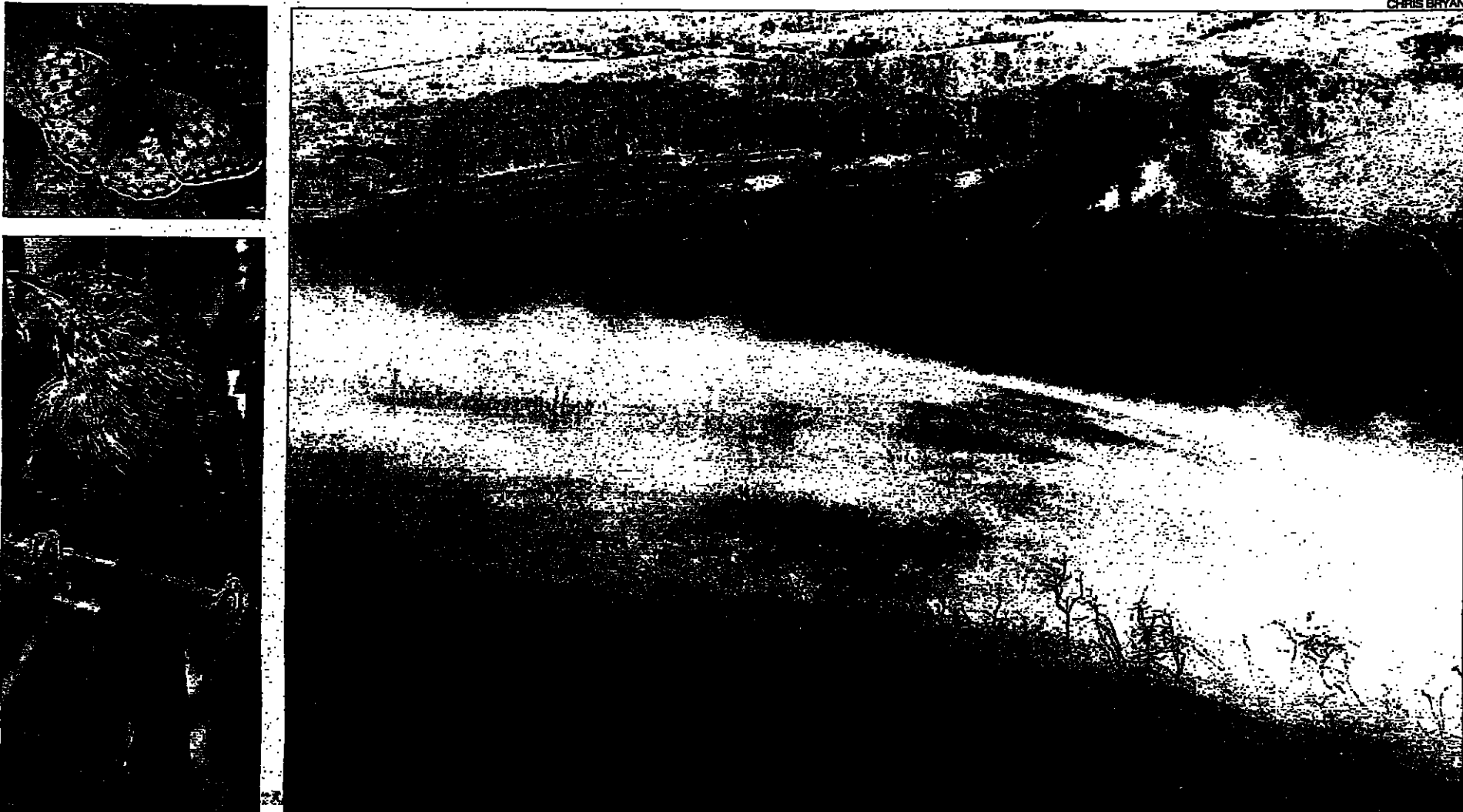
There are any number of people living in rural Britain today who would like

manifestos published on what will happen to the landscape they love. Many more would like firm promises on how the volumes of applied chemicals are to be reduced, the nitrate levels in water controlled, the quality of food guaranteed, and animal husbandry reformed so that mad cow disease will never happen again.

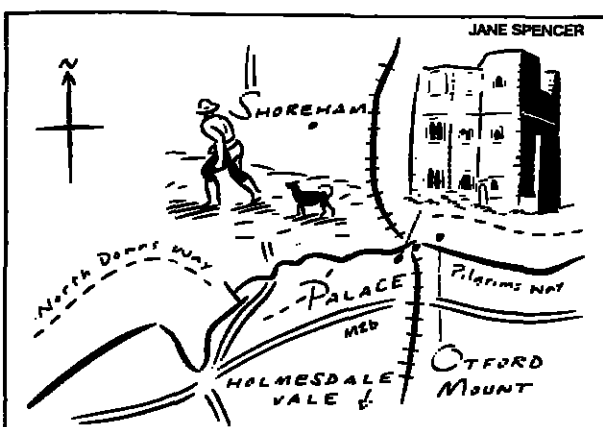
If you think these are matters for central Government and not for individual farmers, you are wrong. A farmer who gets out of bed in a bad mood can do a lot of damage in a single day. He might think twice if, in five years' time, he has to stand up in the village hall and explain why the ancient oak wood had to go.

Of course, this might sound fanciful and you will have to excuse me but, like so many others, I have been embraced by the new spirit of openness in the air; an apparent willingness to overturn selective, corrupt old ways and to foster accountability. But might not the farmers and landowners we never see, the faceless ones, occasionally show their faces above the remaining hedge, please, and explain what they're doing and why they are doing it... Just so that sometimes we could go along and heckle.

Readers' letters are welcome on country matters, from wildlife to village life, people to politics. Write to: Paul Heiney, Weekend, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN



The fire on Trenchlebere Down in Devon destroyed gorse and heather and threatened wildlife, including the high brown fritillary (top left) and the dartford warbler (bottom left)



ON THE SPOT: OTFORD MOUNT, KENT

Rural recommendations

The place: The footpath at the top of Otford Mount, near Sevenoaks in Kent.

The view: Southwest, the vale of Holmesdale; northwest, the chalk downs and the setting of the 19th-century painter Samuel Palmer's *Valley of Vision*.

The appeal: Bird's eye view of Otford, stomping ground of my teens and twenties, home of my first love.

Afficionados: Those who would have wings, and walkers.

Historical interest: Site of the 1945 VE-Day beacon. The Pilgrim's Way runs west-east at the foot of the hill. Otford's ruined palace was once home to archbishops Warham and Cranmer, then Henry VIII, who found it too "rewnatike".

Time of the day/year: Preferably morning, when the sun is behind you. In spring bluebells carpet adjacent woods.

How to get there: By train from London, Victoria, or from Sevenoaks by train or bus.

OS Reference: 533603 (Landranger 188).

Also nearby: The North Downs Way, Shoreham and lots of pubs - follow the footpaths to Romney Street (1½ miles), where the Fox and Hounds will revitalise tired limbs.

IAN STUPPLES

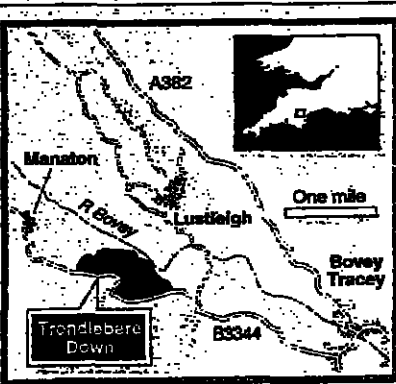
Green shoots of hope among the ashes

As you drive towards Dartmoor from Teignmouth, you can see it from miles away across the lush Devon meadows, with their cattle and dragonflies: a black peak breaking the line of the horizon. This is Trenchlebere Down, which went up in flames on April 7.

The blaze was almost certainly started by an arsonist. It began on the B3344, the road along the Dartmoor crest between Bovey Tracey and Manaton. Everything was dry after the drought, and the fire swept down the valley called Trenchlebere Combe, leapt across the bog at the bottom, and soared up the opposite hillside out onto the heath. Two square miles of gorse and heather were reduced to a black crust.

This was probably the worst of the fires that have ravaged British heaths and moors this spring. But there have been many others, including a serious one in the middle of Dartmoor, another that devastated 1,000 acres of heather in west Cornwall and wrecked several sites of special scientific interest, one near Broadmoor in Berkshire and one that spread to woodland on the Isle of Wight. They have all posed a grave threat to wildlife, including scarce species such as the dartford warbler, the red squirrel and many butterflies and orchids.

Derwent May visits a silent Devon beauty spot devastated by fire and finds that life is returning to the scorched land



I walked into Trenchlebere Combe with Phil Page, the south Devon site manager for English Nature, which now owns the Down. The black, black hillsides rose high on either side of us. There was one small patch high up with a faint flush of green on it, where tiny shoots of bracken and grass were coming through. This, ironically enough, was where there had been a burnt patch before the fire and consequently there was nothing to burn, so the underground bracken rhizomes had passed over and survived.

These hillsides, now so silent, had been alive six weeks before with the song of dartford warblers, linnets and stonechats. The gorse had been a mass of yellow flowers and the grass was carpeted with violets. The caterpillars of a rare butterfly, the high brown fritillary, had been feeding among the violets and by now these handsome orange butterflies would have been flying over the heather.

Along the valley bottom where we were walking we found the only sign left of life - a few pink housewort flowers among the sphagnum moss in the boggy patches, and a solitary bluebell on the path.

We went back to the road on the crest and stood at the edge of the devastated area beyond Trenchlebere Combe. It stretched like a black desert across to the distant valley, where the brilliant green foliage of some beech trees was like a mocking backdrop. Thirty-fire engines from all round the countryside came to

put out the fire, some from as far away as Barnstaple and Collymoreton. One fireman, Mike Steer, found a roasted mallard's egg intact in the ashes. Now just a few sheep graze on some thin grass at the edge of the devastation.

English Nature also owns Yarnor Wood, a stretch of woodland down below the moor, where Mr Page has his house and his office, and we went back there to look at the pied flycatchers in the trees and talk about the implications of this fire.

English Nature only bought the Down two years ago and spent much of last year starting to cut firebreaks between the gorse. A special tractor had to be brought in to cope with the steep hillsides of the Combe. The work had been scheduled to resume the day after the fire.

Dartmoor graziers have fired the gorse and heather since time immemorial, so fresh areas of grass would spring up from the ash for their cattle, sheep and ponies (none of which was harmed by this particular fire since it did not involve land used for grazing). The graziers still have an ill-defined right to carry out burning on the common land, and attempts to reach agreement with them are not always successful. English Nature sets fire to limited areas from time to time in order to prevent the gorse growing too dense and to sustain the heath's character. Mr Page thinks this tradition of fires lies in part behind the vandalism. It is somehow a "done thing" on the moor, and to do it for fun does not seem so heinous to the perpetrators.

However, controlled burning must go on, and what is immediately important is to reach agreements with the graziers. Another dry summer almost certainly stretches ahead, and more fires of this order could leave the heathlands of Britain in a sorry state.

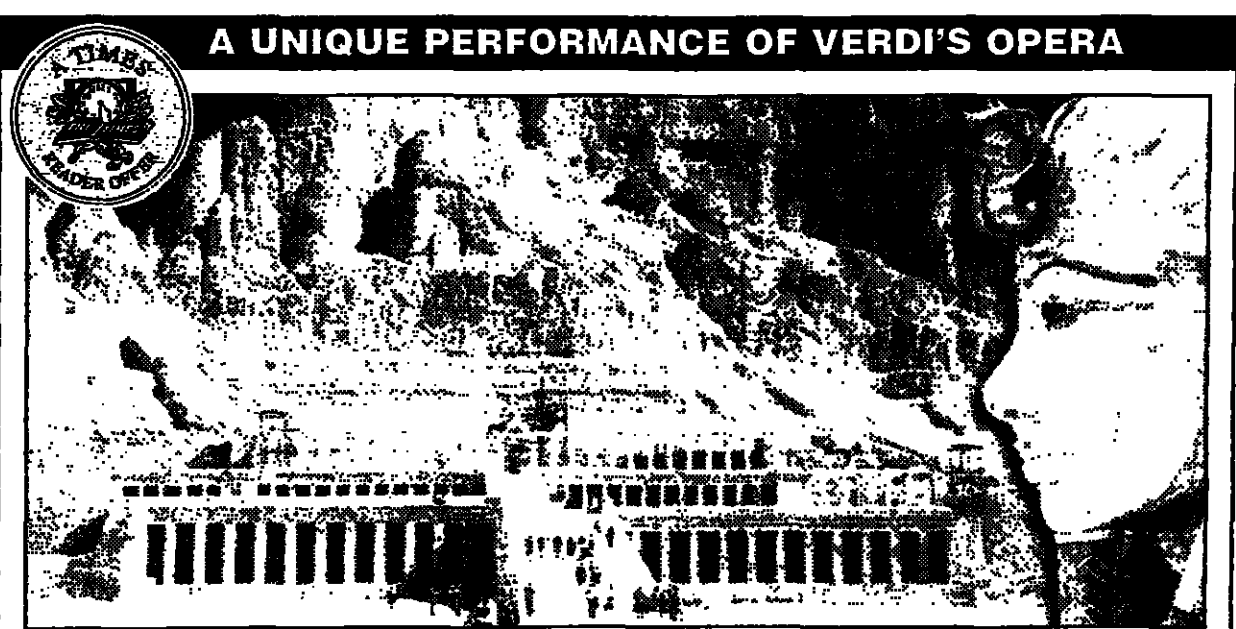
There have already been several other, smaller fires on Dartmoor during this dry spring, but Trenchlebere Down was by far the most destructive for years. Normally a burnt area will be resuming its former appearance after two or three years, but it is difficult to predict the future for an area which has been so badly afflicted.

It is still uncertain how much life survives underground. Some bracken will probably come up, and perhaps a little sap survives in such gorse stumps as still stand wanly here and there. The purple moor grass, or *molinia*, is much more deeply affected, and it may be necessary to resow much of the heather. The heather and grass are the home of lizards and adders, many of which must have been killed by the fire. As for the butterflies, the prospect is grim, unless a few larvae survived on the fringes of the fire and could start a population off again.

The birds will probably come back when the vegetation does. The stonechats and dartford warblers and linnets were just beginning to nest on the Down, and this year's breeding season but most will have escaped and Mr Page believes they have moved to unaffected parts of the moor. In particular, he has noticed greater concentrations of linnets in some areas and these may even have a chance of nesting again this year, since they are a communal nesting species rather than a territorial species. Established stonechats and dartford warblers would, however, try to keep newcomers out of their territories.

We went to one stretch of gorseland, with small birches and pines, at the edge of Yarnor Wood. This was what the Down would have been like without the fire. Stonechats were chattering on high gorse sprays, a whitethroat singing, a tree pipit soaring up from a pine tree and parachuting down again.

We got one glimpse of the long tail of a dartford warbler as it shot over the gorse tops and dived down out of sight. A buzzard rose from a clearing among some birch trees and gave us spectacular views as it circled round, trying to gain height. Even here there was a small burnt area - but this was one English Nature had cleared deliberately for natural regeneration. Suddenly a female stonechat flew down and started feeding on the black surface. Obviously there was some minute insect life even here. Life to feed life - a symbol of hope among the ashes.



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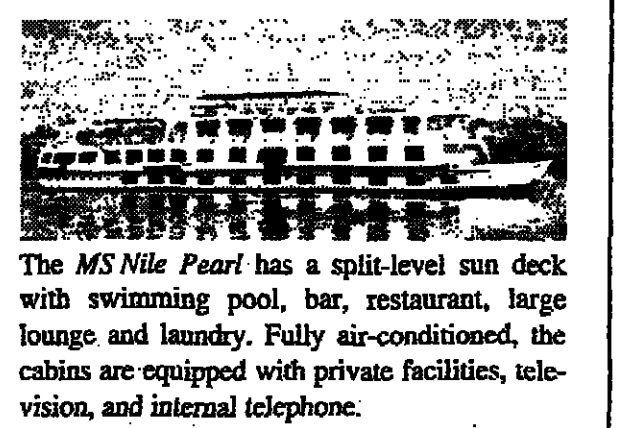
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The traditional dacha is under threat as developers and gangsters turn villages and forests into building sites. Richard Beeston reports

Invasion of the New Russians

Like a slumbering forest creature awoken from a long winter hibernation, by the first hint of spring, Aleksandr Subbotin sniffed the May breeze outside his dacha and scuttled about his garden in excitement.

"There is so much to do," he said, surveying his property with pride and contentedly calculating the hours of work ahead. "There is the cleaning and redecorating to be done on the inside and, of course, the crops must be planted in the garden."

Although his plans might seem grand for a rickety wooden bungalow and its

modest patch of ground, which realistically can only be expected to yield a few vegetables, his emotions are shared by millions of Russians across this vast country during springtime.

In a timeless seasonal routine, workers and millionaires alike head off into the countryside in a mass migration to escape the cramped living conditions of the cities, and in some cases to plant the potatoes that will provide their lifeline for the coming winter.

However, the entire dacha way of life is now under threat. Property developers, gangsters and corrupt officials are conspiring to turn villages,

forests and fields into huge construction sites.

"We have gone from a time when everything was forbidden to a time where everything is allowed," said a Moscow planning official, whose department is unable to keep up with the sudden construction boom which spreads 60 miles in every direction out of the capital.

In contrast to the traditional wood-framed dachas, which blended into the ubiquitous birch forests, the new country homes, called "kottezhi", are not intended to be discreet. Built usually in red brick and adorned with mock-Gothic towers, the vulgar edifices are deliberately designed to show off the wealth of their owners. At Zhukovka, the most prestigious area around Moscow where pop stars and government ministers rub shoulders in the village market, the transformation is almost complete.

Andrei Konachenkov, a property developer, explained: "People want quality housing and they are prepared to pay for it." As he spoke, his team of workmen were putting the finishing touches to three prefabricated houses in the garden of a former wooden dacha, which in turn was being dismantled unceremoniously log by log to make way for benches and an outdoor barbecue.

Although his project was more modest than most, he could still expect to rent his three-bedroom Swedish-designed suburban homes for about £6,000 a month, a bargain in an area where most luxury homes fetch £15,000.

Not surprisingly, the building boom and the invasion of the "New Russians" into the conservative world of country life has led to an explosive culture clash.

Villagers in tight-knit communities find themselves cut off from their new neighbours by high walls and security guards. There have even been cases of new dachas being

torched, presumably by local arsonists angered by the invasion of their communities.

Cases of rural gangsterism have even emerged. An acquaintance of mine, who bought a plot of land beside a river, was accosted by his neighbour as he made building plans for his country home. "If you send any workmen out here, expect to get them back in a bag," said the man. "Your house will block my view of the water."

Unusually for Russia, the incident was resolved peacefully when the neighbour agreed to buy the plot of land and avoid what could have become a blood feud.

At my own dacha, which I share with colleagues in the village of Mozhinka, 30 miles

outside Moscow, the tensions between old and new, rich and poor, are palpable.

The area was originally set aside in communist days for senior members of the Academy of Sciences. Today it is divided among elderly physicists, who walk their dogs and tend their gardens, and the new arrivals, who can be glimpsed momentarily as they race down the tiny village street in foreign sports cars and into the safety of their walled compounds.

Some in Russia fear the advent of the new dachas will destroy a way of life and turn the landscape into what one critic described as "Mad Max goes to suburbia". But others contend that the country is big enough for all tastes.

A recent study estimated that about 2.5 million people in the Moscow region alone owned land in the countryside. Indeed, the community is so large that during last summer's presidential elections, the authorities had to reschedule polling day for midweek because they feared the "dachniki" would not bother to return to the city to vote on one of their cherished weekends.

Whether it is a small log cabin with a communal well and an outdoor lavatory, or a sprawling new villa, the dacha is considered something of a birthright by Russians, who depend on their summers in the country to re-establish their roots with the land.

Numerous Russian writers and artists have evoked the

theme to explore the inner workings of the Russian soul. Anton Chekhov used the evocative dacha atmosphere as the backdrop to all his plays. Boris Pasternak relied on his simple country home at the village of Peredelkino, outside Moscow, to inspire his writing.

The serenity of dacha life was probably best captured on film by Nikita Mikhalkov's Oscar-winning *Burnt by the Sun*, which depicts a perfect Russian summer's day in the country, until the hero is led away from his dacha by Stalin's secret police in the final wrenching scene.

In Russia, which has always been totalitarian, the dacha has come to symbolise

freedom of action and privacy," said Nikolai Klimontovich in a recent commentary for the *Kommersant* Daily newspaper. "It is synonymous with stable family life and security against peril — which in Russia means security from the state."

The revolution taking place in the countryside, he went on to argue, was the obvious reaction of a generation of Russians brought up in communal flats and hostels, who finally had the opportunity to build the house of their dreams. "For the New Russians the dacha remains the subconscious symbol of freedom," he wrote. "We should not destroy them. They are a reflection of our natural mentality."



Idyll from the past: the evocative dacha atmosphere, used by Chekhov in plays such as *The Seagull*, above, is threatened by new entrepreneurs



The dacha has come to symbolise freedom from the state

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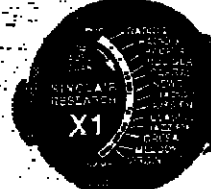
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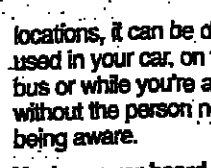
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Must children be labelled selfish and anti-social just because they don't have siblings? Adrian Mourby explores the parents' dilemma



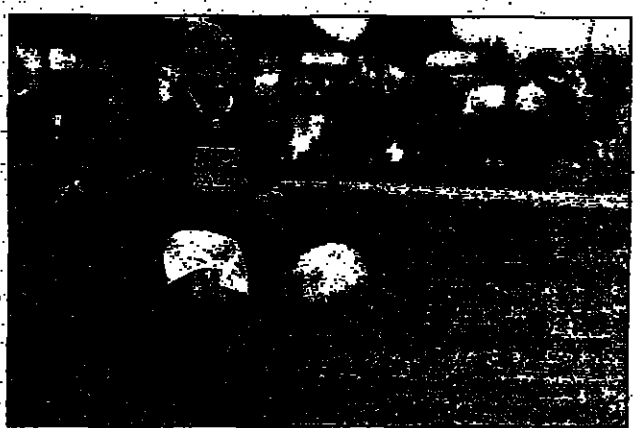
Only child Thomas Cole. "He complains about not having any brothers or sisters when playing football," says his mother, Cathy. "The rest of the time he's glad he doesn't have to share"

Well, he is an only child...

Al children are capable of behaving selfishly or of wanting the limelight. Yet if the infant who is hogging all the attention, or having a tantrum, happens to lack brothers or sisters, his parents may find him doubly condemned in the eyes of many people. The phrase an "Only One" is frequently spoken with a sad shake of the head, as if it's the stigma of an habitual sinner and the root of all anti-social behaviour.

Cathy and Mostyn Cole are aware of this with their son, Thomas, aged eight. "We went on holiday a little while back with some friends," Mrs Cole says. "One day Thomas was making a fuss because our friends' children wouldn't play football with him, and I heard the other parents referring to him as 'petulant'. Now, I'm sure he was being petulant but the other children were getting into a state as well. But the thing is, because Thomas was an only child it was his bad behaviour that was singled out and commented on."

The Coles, who live in Penarth, South Wales, intended to have more children but after Thomas was born Mrs Cole, who works for Welsh National Opera, suffered two miscarriages and so they accepted that it was unlikely Thomas would ever have any brothers or sisters. "What I object to is the way other people feel quite free to comment on this," Mrs Cole says. "Nobody ever asks, 'Why did you decide to have two or three children?' But if you have only one you get asked, 'Oh, didn't you want any more?' or 'Couldn't you have any more?' And there was a time, certainly after the miscarriages and all the grief, when I found that



Although Thomas, left, benefits from Cathy and Mostyn's undivided time and attention, they deny he is spoilt

kind of question harrowing. Even today I don't see why I have to justify myself."

Unlike the Coles, Barbara Pierce chose to have only one child. She and her husband Guy live in a restored farmhouse above the Wye Valley in Gloucestershire. "Guy, an only child, wanted a huge family, but I'd been the middle one of three and hated it," Mrs Pierce says. "I used to daydream about someone discovering that actually I was adopted and that my real parents wanted me back and when I got to their home there wouldn't be any others. Just me, no squabbling over toys, no fighting for my parents' attention but, best of all, no jealousy. It seemed blissful and I used to vow that I would never put any child of mine through all that."

"When we married, children was one of the things we had long discussions about. Fortunately Guy agreed with me in the end and I don't think he has regretted it."

The Pierces' daughter, Rachel, is six, and her mother has returned to teaching part-time. "I'm so aware that a lot of

children's literature is full of maladjusted Only Ones," Mrs Pierce says. "There's George from *The Famous Five*, who's a real oddity until she meets Julian, Dick and Anne. And Colin from *The Secret Garden*, who is helped by Dickon and Martha Sowerby. It's always the same: only children are spoilt and selfish and can't relate to the real world until they encounter a happy, healthy band of siblings and learn about life from them. Of course, these stories were written at a time when you were supposed to produce lots of kids so that the Empire could be expanded. Nowadays that's irresponsible, but we still get all the propaganda pushed at us."

Like Mrs Pierce, the Coles reject the suggestion that having their undivided attention has spoilt Thomas, although they admit he has something of a charmed life. As his father puts it: "If he asks for something from the shops we don't have to weigh up all the time, 'Well, if you have that your brother and sister will have to have something and it'll all be too expensive.' But, if any-



thing," Mrs Cole says, "that's made Thomas more generous himself. He's always giving things to older children just because he likes them. And he's terribly concerned for us, too. When Mostyn went into hospital recently Thomas made a real fuss of me and put his arms round my shoulders and asked me if everything would be all right."

This close identification with the parents is something often felt by only children. By contrast, Mrs Cole can remember how much she and her siblings formed a cohesive unit against her parents. "When my mother used to get angry with me, having a sister and two brothers acted like a buffer. We were able to support each other. But Thomas hasn't got that. If I'm angry with him it really upsets him. I tell him sometimes, 'If you had brothers and sisters Mummy would be just as angry with them', but he hasn't got that sense of perspective. I think he gets the best and the worst of us as a result."

One thing Thomas does

benefit from is his parents' time and attention. Although in his fifties, Mr Cole frequently plays football at the end of a day in the classroom. "Often I'm really too tired but I think, 'Well if I don't play with Thomas, no one else will.'"

That's the only time he complains about not having any brothers or sisters," Mrs Cole says. "The rest of the time he says it would be boring. I think he doesn't like the idea of having to share his bedroom. He's very territorial about it."

Mrs Pierce also spends a lot of her time playing with her daughter but, in their case, living in the country has meant that it is difficult for Rachel to see school friends unless an adult is willing to deliver and collect. "I'm aware that Rachel doesn't get the kind of spontaneous games that two children dream up just because they happen to be in the kitchen or the garden together," Mrs Pierce says. "So I'm always on the look out for things we can do together. But I think Rachel is a very imaginative child. She makes her own entertainment, telling long stories to her dolls. She

writes some of them down already and they're really good."

"If she were in a family of five brothers and sisters you'd think, 'How marvellous to have such a reflective, imaginative child'. But because she's an Only One, if I tell people about her stories I can see they're thinking, 'Oh, that poor Only Child'. That's what I don't like."

There's no doubt that in this country the parents of only children can often feel themselves on the defensive. As Mrs Pierce says: "We are in a minority, those of us who choose to have just one child, and I think people can be very suspicious of anyone who's different like that. It becomes the big thing and any problems in later life get attributed to it. Certainly I know Guy found that."

"But I wonder what things are like in China. If you have a country where the norm is that everyone has an only child, do you get people shaking their heads and saying, 'Well of course he's playing up... he's one of two, you know?'"

Solos who made it big

PITY THE only child, a much-maligned creature. "Being an only child is a disease itself," one psychologist noted many years ago. Known as onlies, singletons, solos and little emperors, a child without siblings is a child scorned.

In the words of Julie Burchill, the writer and only child: "Somebody once said that only children are natural psychopaths. It does take a big jump for us to relate to people in the way others do. You identify with people as objects to push around."

Leonardo da Vinci, Genghis Khan, Stalin, Elvis Presley and Indira Gandhi were only children, as are Betty Boothroyd, Enoch Powell, John Cleese, Nick Faldo and Ruby Wax.

Such children score higher than their peers on achievement, motivation and self-esteem "because they don't have the complication of the sibling relationship", says Dr Ann Laybourn, the author of *The Only Child: Myths and Reality*. "They are not rubbish and don't have their self-esteem dented by a brother or sister."

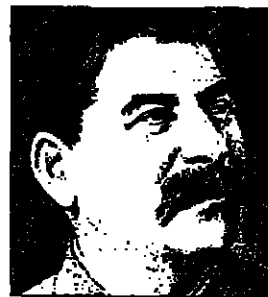
THIS CAN lead to distortion and introversion in the only child's mind. The novelist Kate Atkinson says: "You are entirely locked into your own view of things. You make your own deductions and they can be very wrong, but there's no one to tell you."

Children with siblings are continually being compared by their parents. But an only child is never dethroned in the family pecking order, and bathes in a pool of undivided parental attention. "You get the idea that you're a little bit special," John Cleese says in *Families - and How to Survive Them*.

PROFESSOR Cary Cooper, a behaviour psychologist at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, says: "They often have a good self-image because they feel they're the only one. Equally, they know everything depends on them. Parents usually want their children to achieve what they haven't achieved. All that investment translates into achievement. But the driver to achievement is slight neuroticism."

Not that only children are maladjusted. Studies show that they get on fine with their peers and that they are less prone to psychological problems.

ALEX WIJERATNE



Joseph Stalin



Betty Boothroyd



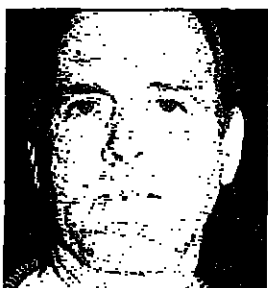
Nick Faldo



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Ruth Gledhill joins the Lord Mayor of London for a Rogationtide ceremony

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The Lord Mayor of London



WIELDING a savage birch, Eddie Thomas, 12, was held upside down over the Thames from the Royal Nore, flagship of the Port of London Authority. Holding one leg was

Canon Peter Delaney, a governor of Eddie's school and vicar of All Hallows church, and at the other was Simon Thorogood, Master of St Dunstan's lower school.

The company of pike-men and musketeers looked on, armed to the teeth, warlike decorations glinting, guarding the Lord Mayor of London. Alderman Roger Cork, as Eddie gave the river a sound thrashing.

This was the annual ceremony of Beating the Bounds, which dates from medieval times when parishes asserted their boundaries by marching around them at Rogationtide, praying for their crops and beating the boundary marks with wands.

Although St Dunstan's school is now co-educational and in Canford, it was one of the original six grammar schools in the City of London, and each year, 12 pupils with birch wands return to beat the bounds.

Having marked the mid-river boundary outside HM Customs and Excise, the procession disembarked, headed by Di Robertshaw, a sister-

tutor at Great Ormond Street Hospital, carrying the All Hallows cross from a Spanish galleon that came into the Upper Pool in the 17th century.

Behind her were two acolytes, the beating party, the acting headmaster Dr Anthony Seldon, the head of school, Thomas van Birkel, as well as churchwardens, priests, head verger, school governors, the Barge-master, the Master of the Gardeners' Company and Master of the Worshipful Company of Bakers, and

others, all in ceremonial dress. A drumbeat sounded out as pike-men and musketeers brought up the rear, causing the police horse in attendance to flare his nostrils, stamp his feet and execute the odd aerial leap, as if expecting a full-blooded charge at any moment. I joined the congregation, parishioners and gaping tourists at the back as this unlikely assembly marched up the embankment and into the City.

At each boundary mark the procession stopped, the parish clerk raised his staff and we sang and prayed. "Heavenly father, we ask you to bless the City of London and all who live and work in this parish. May peace be found here and the love of God be in each heart," said Canon Delaney. Then the children set to with their wands, beating the railings, or the pavement, at the boundary.

At the Tower, these beatings were more than symbolic because the boundary is still disputed by the City and the Crown, and has been from the earliest period of English history, according to Joseph Maskell's *Parochial History. The Corporation of London has for centuries claimed jurisdiction over the Tower Liberty. The Crown has constantly resisted this, repeatedly enlarging its fortress against municipal protests.*

About 50 yards remain in dispute to this day, and every three years, the Tower wardens stand where they consider the boundary to be, and the children run through them to where they think the boundary is. This year there were no wardens, but we still cheered ourselves hoarse as the 12 boys and girls ran across to the Tower railings, and gave them the best and soundest beating of all.

● All Hallows by the Tower with St Dunstan-in-the-East, Byward Street, London EC3R 5BJ (0171-481 2028).



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Close shaves on the highway of death

One of the last great adventures is
to travel by road from Kashgar in
China to Islamabad in Pakistan

Oh My God! read the inscription across the wind-screen of a Pakistani minibus as it careered down the Karakoram Highway. Several thousand feet above were the snow-dusted steeple peaks of the mountain range from which the highway takes its name; to the side of the road, a chain of white-painted stones offered a token barrier between the minibus and a 1,500ft sheer drop to the River Indus below.

The minibus's motif deftly summed up one of the last great highway adventures which allows the traveller to go from Kashgar in western China through the Khunjerab Pass and to travel the length of the Karakoram Highway to Pakistan, a road hacked through mountain rock for 1,000 miles at a cost of hundreds of Chinese and Pakistani lives. It is a road which nature clearly believes has no business existing; avalanches and rock falls close it frequently.

Enter the highway's mountain fastnesses and the only regular companions along the way are flocks of shiny black crows. The only people about are Pakistani militia or policemen enduring something akin to a posting on Hadrian's Wall for a Roman soldier.

Kashgar was the principal Chinese way-station on the Silk Road: a crossroads for trade and religion, linking the great Chinese empire with central Asia, and a superb listening post for spies. In front of the Id Kah mosque is Kashgar's colourful and exotic Sunday market, offering every licit and illicit treasure of the Orient. In one of the tea houses in the Muslim quarter, where guests sit cross-legged on vast tables, one can easily imagine the days of the Great Game, when the British and Russian empires vied for influence in

central Asia. Large second-floor balconies allow a perfect view of all the comings and goings on the street below.

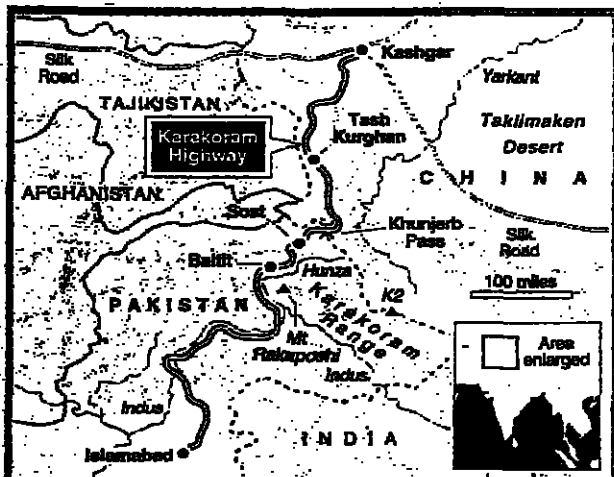
Now, the only intelligence gathering is likely to be by the Chinese, nervous of the influence from the Islamic nations to the west, or the conservationists, horrified at the pelt of rare animals killed illegally and sold in the market.

The route skirts the Taklimakan desert — the Black Desert which stretches into western China. Distances are vast, journey times indeterminate. The journey from Kashgar to the old staging town of Tash Kurghan takes seven hours along indifferent roads, making no allowance for the occasional flat tyre or filling up with dirty petrol.

Meals are often robust and chewy: mutton and rice morning and night. But this is a taste of what foreign travellers used to be like through countries that the Mongol hordes had subdued; at times you half expect to hear the clatter of hooves across the high steppe. Instead, you catch a glimpse of the drug routes that branch off a long valley into Afghanistan.

The Tang Shan mountains are a backdrop on the road out of Kashgar through miles of upland steppe in a landscape so vast that, paradoxically, clear days give the impression that you have only to put a hand out to touch a mountain. Most of the time the only accompaniment along the road are flocks of snow bunting, which duck and dive along beside the bus like tiny aerial porpoises.

Here and there clusters of yurts (Mongolian tents) are peopled by children in clothes of brilliant red, mauve and magenta, the boys incongruous in miniature trilby hats. Often the boys have a camel with them which looks singularly unimpressed by travellers. The only other people on



KARAKORAM HIGHWAY FACT FILE

■ The author travelled with Exodus Travel (0181-675 5555), which operates a 19-day Central Asian Discovery tour, starting in Tashkent (via Moscow) and flying out of Islamabad. The package costs £1,830, including flights, accommodation, guide and transfers. A local payment of about £100 covers all meals except eight lunches.

■ Visas for Russia, Uzbekistan, China and Pakistan cost approximately £150 in total. A visa for Kirghizia is payable at the border and costs US\$40 (about £25).

■ Health: The full range of inoculations is advised, as well as hepatitis B, winter-purifying tablets and suitable precautions for upset stomachs. Check with your doctor.

■ Reading: The Travel Bookshop (0171 229-5260) recommends *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*, by Peter Hopkirk (OUP, £7.99); *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, by Albert von Le Coq (OUP, £7.95).

the road between Kashgar and Tash Kurghan are herdsman-riding donkeys hardly able to carry them, cowering against the light snow of early summer. Occasionally the carcass of an animal without sufficient reserves for the journey lies by the roadside.

The limit of Chinese territory comes up in a blizzard: a low, white building almost invisible except for its red flag and the smartest, most cheerful border guards to be found anywhere, their green uniforms neatly pressed. They do not disguise their amazement that Westerners should have bought the native Islamic stringed musical instruments of Kashgar, which they consider out of the Stone Age.

It is at the border that you get the first sense of what it costs in human terms to build this road. A memorial list of names, etched in stones below a red flag emblem, is the first indication that bizarre friendship projects have a cost which goes far beyond materials and money. If ever there was a "political" road, it is this one.

Built largely with Chinese money, the road serves no particular trading purpose and was intended as a signal of support to Pakistan in its confrontation with India. The Pakistani businessmen, who flock into Kashgar to buy cheap Chinese silk and sell manufactured goods, all travel by air.

The road is a symbol of solidarity, a vast representation of a political ideal which has only recently reopened along its full length. As a result, concessions to tourists are few, as we find out when our Chinese-guided minibus encounters a landslide.

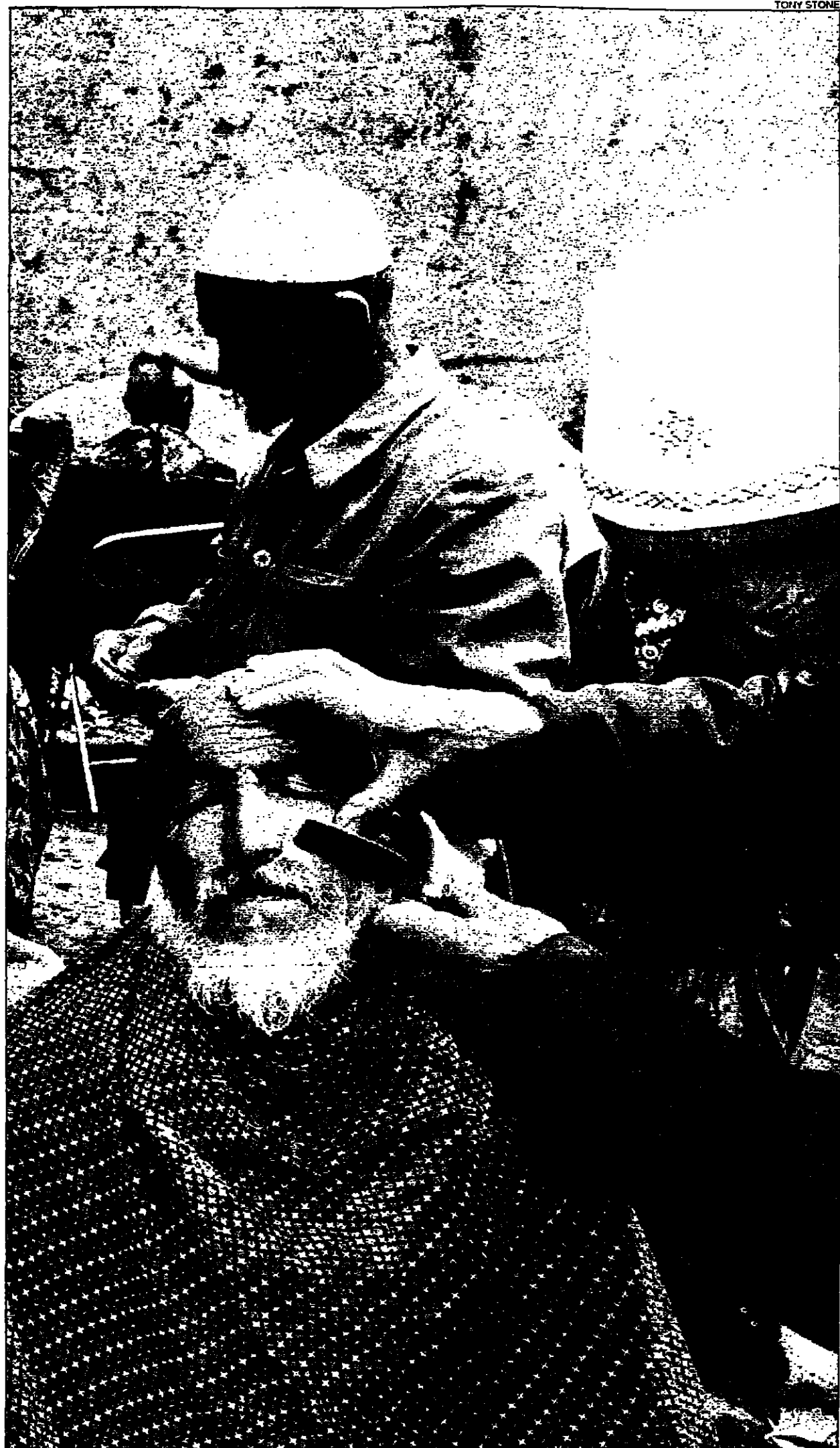
Two minor rock falls later, we pull up at a police post. The road is blocked ahead, says the moustached officer. We cannot go back without visas to re-enter China and cannot go forward: in prospect is a night in the mountains without food or shelter. There is a guest house but it is only for the military: radio appeals to the officer in charge in northern Pakistan are rejected.

Eventually, the Pakistan police take pity on us and yield up a small stone-built house for our use, along with their meagre vegetarian supper. We are 10,000ft up in the Karakoram, home of the notorious K2, and it is cold. I am the unlucky one for whom there is no sleeping bag. It is the coldest night of my life, despite the fact that I put on every spare piece of clothing I have. In the morning, the electronics of my camera are frozen and a cloud of crows dive on us, mocking our predicament.

Brilliant sunshine brings renewed hope and, with a team of Pakistani boys to help with the rock-clearing, we set off again, this time to be confronted with the mother of all rock falls. The road effectively no longer exists, and the only way to get through is to try to traverse on foot a few hundred yards of loose scree while dodging rocks hurtling down at 50mph.

"Never mind," the guide says, "wait till five o'clock and it'll be all right." So we wait. The theory seems plausible enough: the sunshine melts the snow high up which, in turn, soaks the rocks' sandy runway, eventually turning it into a mire through which no rock can roll.

For the whole day we sit and watch the rocks while tension rises and confidence ebbs. Then, right on time at five o'clock, the mountain delivers its verdict on our plans. To the accompaniment of a massive roar, boulders the size of double-decker buses come crashing down. Momentarily stunned, we realise now is the time to make a dash for it: having relieved itself of that mighty load, the mountain could not have anything left to



Kashgar's colourful and exotic market offers everything from barbers and bangles to licit and illicit treasures of the Orient

hurl. The next few minutes are a frenzied blur: running across the shifting scree, gasping for breath, while trying desperately to stop sliding into the river, and glancing fearfully at the mountain top. Suddenly, a guide grabs my elbow to keep me on track; and then, as the lungs go into hyperventilating overdrive, there is solid ground underfoot at last. The panic is over.

From Sost, down the valley of the Indus, the landscape becomes more fertile as you head towards the Hunza Valley and Baltit Fort, which overlooks this exquisite valley, whose inhabitants are said to be descended from Alexander the Great. Snow-capped mountains swing 360 degrees around the valley overlooking ranks of rich green terraces climbing up their lower approaches and capped by Mount Rakaposhi.

The locals here are open and friendly and, unlike the Islamic people of the plains, exquisitely green-eyed. Girls are allowed outdoors.

As you go south, so the influence of Islam becomes more apparent and the townscapes become more masculine. By the time you reach Islamabad in search of a late-night bottle of beer, a clandestine request to a waiter in one of the city's best hotels brings only an embarrassed refusal. But then, the journey was billed as an adventure holiday.

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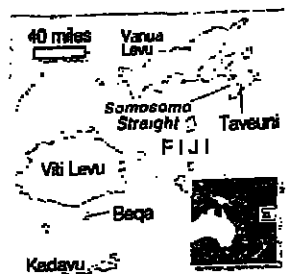
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Fiji: With three world-class diving sites, the islands are an irresistible attraction to the underwater explorer

Challenge of the rainbow corals



I was 60ft below the surface of the warm Fijian sea, surrounded by a rainbow of colours. The soft coral, in magenta, mar-malade orange, canary yellow and lilac, blossomed on the reef like flowers in a carefully cultivated garden, the vivid colours illuminated by shafts of sunshine penetrating down through the water.

Tyrone, our lean, imposing Fijian dive master, caught my attention and invited me to see what he'd captured. He opened his cupped hands releasing what can best be described as a miniature flying carpet. It was a Spanish dancer, a 3cm-long sea slug, which normally slithers across the reef, grazing on algae. While on the reef, this black creature with flecks of green, blue and purple is uninspiring, but release it into the open water and it becomes entrancing. It moves by undulating the sides of its body, gracefully swirling around until it settles again on the reef.

We were diving the Rainbow Reef in the Somosomo Strait, off the island of Taveuni in northern Fiji. Getting to the island is an adventure in itself. Qantas just wanted to weigh my baggage on the international flight to Fiji, but weight is so critical on the eight-seater aircraft that flew us on to Taveuni that I had to be weighed myself. As if the indignity of that was not enough, once aboard the plane I was asked to move from the



Deep down in the multicoloured "soft coral capital of the world" off the Fiji islands, divers encounter fascinating forms of marine life, from tiny Spanish dancer slugs to huge and menacing whaler sharks

right to the left of the aircraft, to balance it out. But the humiliation of being too heavy for the right side of the plane was worth it for the aerial views of Fiji's reefs, which attract divers from all over the

world. In diving circles, Fiji's 300 or more islands are known as the "soft coral capital of the world". Soft corals lack the hard limestone skeleton but make up for it in their colours. Before, when I've seen soft

coral, it has been the odd isolated clump. In Fiji you see whole coral heads and reef walls blanketed in its pastel colours. But there's more to diving off Taveuni than coral. Six-foot bronze whaler sharks, menacingly cruising the reef, are a frequent sight. And there are goby fish, which have a fascinating symbiotic relationship with shrimps.

The shrimp and the goby share a tunnel in coral rubble on the seabed. It's the shrimp which digs the tunnel but, with poor vision, it relies on the goby to keep a look out for danger. If you creep up on them, you can see the unlikely couple playing Mr and Mrs at the mouth of their home, the shrimp carefully resting one of its long antennae on the fish so that it knows when to follow its partner into the burrow for a fast retreat.

Taveuni has one of the most intimate and beautiful resorts I've ever visited. "Dive Taveuni" accommodates only 12 guests and is on a cliff-top, with spectacular vistas over the Somosomo Strait to Fiji's second largest island Vanua Levu. The evening meal is eaten on an veranda, with stunning views of Fiji's South Sea sunsets. With such a small number of guests at the table, it's more like having a dinner party than a meal at a holiday resort.

Diving is not limited to Taveuni: Fiji has two other world-class dive sites which have only recently opened. Six miles south of the main island of Viti Levu is Beqa, set in a large lagoon which has 100 dive sites, and offers the challenge to swim with oceanic white tip sharks. Beqa is also the home of Fiji's fire walkers, who tread red hot stones without burning themselves. The traditional ceremony is steeped in taboo and custom, with the men not eating coconuts or having any contact with women for two



Sunset on Fiji, and a beacon is lit to beckon the tourists

weeks before the ceremony. The third of Fiji's leading dive sites is off the island of Kandavu. One dive here is called "The Evil Trench" and involves descending 200ft. It's not for the faint-hearted, but those who are either stupid or brave enough to make the journey are rewarded with breathtaking views.

The dive takes you through a tunnel 60ft long and more than 30ft high, and ends in an archway the size of London's Marble Arch. The exhilaration as you fly through this huge underwater structure is intense. The whole experience is enhanced by nitrogen narcosis, a phenomenon which occurs when divers descend into deep water and absorb such a large amount of nitrogen into their bodies that it makes them feel drunk.

The other high on Kandavu

comes from Fiji's national beverage: yagona, or kava. Virtually every Fijian indulges in kava-drinking sessions, but the brew in Kandavu is reputedly the strongest.

My introduction to it came through our mellow Fijian dive guide, Dan. The kava ceremony took place at his village beneath the statuesque coconut palms and within earshot of the waves gently breaking on the beach. The sun was just setting over the horizon as one of Dan's relatives started preparing our brew. The process involved the brown pulverised root of the kava plant being strained through a linen bag into a large ancient-looking wooden bowl.

The result was a light-brown liquid with the unset-

Fiji Fact Box

- The author travelled with Qantas (0345 747767), which flies daily to Fiji via Sydney. Prices start at £1,187.
- In Fiji, Sunflower Airlines (00 679 723 016) operates flights to Taveuni and Kandavu. A return ticket to Taveuni costs £130. Kandavu £76. The journey to Beqa is by boat, organised through the Marlin Bay Resort.
- An overnight stay is normal on arrival at Fiji's international airport at Nadi. The Royal Denarau (00 679 750 000) quotes £180 a night but discounts are normally available.
- The author stayed at Dive Taveuni, the Marlin Bay Resort and Dive Kandavu. Accommodation, meals and a two-tank dive costs £160 a day at Dive Taveuni (00 679 330 440). At the Marlin Bay Resort (00 679 304 042) on Beqa, the same package costs £160. At Dive Kandavu (00 679 311 780) the cost is £100.
- Dive packages to Fiji can also be arranged through Scuba Safaris (01452 740919) and Hayes & Jarvis (0181-222 7840). H&J offers a one-week holiday at Taveuni from £1,749, including flights, full-board accommodation and dives.
- When to go: May to October is the best time; it is cooler, less humid and for divers the visibility is better.
- Health: Fiji is free of most tropical diseases, including malaria, but tetanus, polio, typhoid and hepatitis A immunisations are recommended. Check with your GP first.
- Money: There are two Fijian dollars to the pound. Credit cards are accepted at all resorts.
- Reading: The Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5260) recommends *Adventuring in the Pacific* by Susanna Margolis (Sierra Club, £10.99); *Slow Boats Home* by Gavin Young (Penguin, £7.99); *The Happy Isles of Oceania*, by Paul Theroux (Penguin, £6.99); *Fiji Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £8.99).

ting appearance of muddy water. When I drank a coconut shell full of the peppery tasting grog, I found it also had the same gritty texture of muddy water. But Dan and our five other Fijian drinking mates loved it. We sat in a circle, and round and round went the coconut shell until I had gulped down 12 cups.

To my intense disappointment, I experienced no after-effects. Others have talked of fuzzy headedness, and even mild euphoria. I was just left wondering what effect the kava would have on my digestive system.

But there was much to enjoy in the ceremony. By the time we'd reached our tenth cup the stars were out and Dan and his friends had picked up their guitars and were singing along to Fijian love songs. As they strummed away I was

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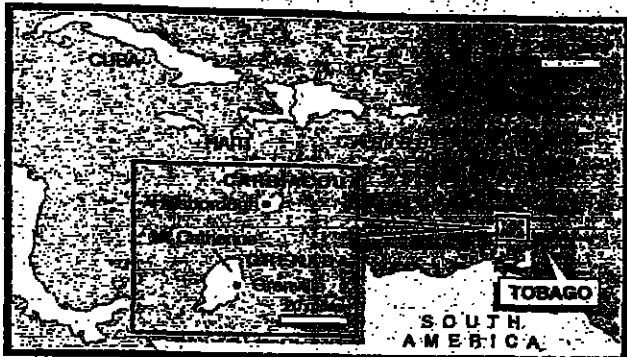
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Caribbean: Tobago, Trinidad's quiet alternative, pirates in Carriacou, and great beaches in Grenada

I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts



Have you ever stayed at Crown Reef on Tobago? If you did you probably never went back. The place lost heart and I looked hangdog, plainly longing to fall into the sea and entice scuba divers.

Well, it never had a beach — a bad start for any holiday resort. That would matter less for Tobago's Mount Irvine Hotel because of its peerless golf course, but generally resort hotels without beaches are the *castrati* of the Caribbean. Crown Reef, a government property, crept into a pigeon-hole. Who would buy a modern ruin without a beach?

Who but John Jeffers, a financial greyhound with a Bermuda resort pedigree. A lateral thinker, he brought in a beach and set it down between Crown Reef and the sea. You can do that with a vast hose that sucks sand from the seabed, plus its complement of small astonished creatures, and spurs it on to the shore like toothpaste from a tube.

Crown Reef vanished and Coco Reef rose in its place. It looks wonderful now. You can imagine God saying: "Thank you, John, I always meant to do that." A dawn fly-past of pelicans salutes the achievement daily, before diving for breakfast.

However, a beach is merely a basic, like trousers. Coco Reef needed more than sand to reach speed. For instance, a 1959 Silver Cloud for the three-minute airport transfer. And then enough Mexican floor tiles to ballast a freighter. And what a struggle, getting import permits. And 100 per cent tax. But worth it to attain the rich red look of the lobby — large enough and with all the stairways and balconies needed to stage *Aida*, or multiple steel bands playing the *Biz*. View it from your restaurant table above.

Last summer was Coco Reef's first season, and during

my week 19 guests had a choice of 135 rooms. They snorkelled and snogged and snored. They sneaked off in glass-bottomed boats called *Sunkissed* and *Phantoms* and *Star Chicks*. They never went near the beach. My pictures show 40 vacant sun-loungers — and a gardener wheeling a barrow among *casuarinas*, *Wrightia* like saucers.

The transformation cost £23 million, plus topping up the beach. Further along by Goldsborough Bay, Richmond Great House does without a beach as it sits above the coast, fanned by trade winds and with a nice view of the 1,500 forested acres it once controlled.

After a career of research into African architecture, the Tobagonian Professor Hollis Lynch took this oldest surviving Great House, set out his stall of African art and thought the old slave quarters ideal for the staff of a ten-room service guest house. With its eclectic miscellany of books and home grown fruit and veg, what more could anyone want? A beach, perhaps. "Nonsense," he says, "there's a pool. More than a beach, we need marketing."

Tobago is Trinidad's quiet alternative and Carriacou is Grenada's. You can fly, or take a ferry, that docks in Hillsborough, a crab's scuttles away from the Silver Beach Hotel. This is built on sand on a former mangrove swamp. Despite what is said in Matthews' 726, building on sand turns out all right, says Oliver Bullen, its Carriacouan owner, provided you compact half a dozen layers until they are hard as concrete. And the rainwater off an asphalt roof is as drinkable as that off galvanised iron, provided you take an asphalt that inhibits the growth of fungus and wait two months for the colour to drain off.

Drinkable rain was coming



Tobago has superb golf courses and some splendid, deserted beaches. It is an excellent base for scuba diving

off the roofs like Niagara as we talked, and I could hardly see Jack Adams, islet where the Jack Adams, the staple of Silver Beach's menus, are gathered.

A fisherman collecting his traps shipped his oar, stood up in his boat and put his hands in his pockets meditatively. I love a Caribbean beach in the rain, and swimming is special if you lie on your front like a hippo, eyes at water level, and watch a million tiny globules bouncing off to create a dazzle of lights.

Mr Bullen went off to re-schedule a bank loan. The island's visitor figures had dropped alarmingly: even at Christmas, occupancy figures had been a pain and the

catamaran he had borrowed money for was not pulling its tourist weight. He was independently stressed but most businesses were under pressure: Bullen's Travel Agency, Bullen's Insurance, Bullen's Supercentre, Bullen's Hardware, Bullen's Shell Station and — where Vena Bullen began it all in Hillsborough — Bullen's Industrious Stores.

When he had gone I swam out towards a yacht flying Roger, probably a joke but possibly serious, given that smuggling between Petit Martinique and Carriacou is the commercial forte of both is-

lands. After some banter with the wimpish pirates (they wore oilskins), I headed back into another phenomenon peculiar to swimming in the rain: the surge of floatsman gushing from a beach outlet, bearing mud and sticks and coconut husks and plants, plus the odds and sods of human neglect. There must have been good protein as well, because suddenly I was surrounded by leaping fish and diving birds.

There were only two other guests in the hotel, a Frenchwoman who had toasted herself to resemble a kipper, and her young boyfriend who was still as white as the beach, though clearly they were not ill-assorted in any other re-

spect — a poor conversational outlook for me. However, a solitary scuba fanatic turned up at dinner and talked enthusiastically about the diving around Carriacou. He had not, of course, noticed the rainstorm underwater, but said the fish were very noisy and Cousteau had been wrong in calling it the silent world.

On Grenada the great beach is Grand Anse, two miles of pulse-stirring stuff with big-box music to match. Naturally the majority of tourist hotels

are drawn up at the edge like crocodiles. But the island has other, less robust, beaches. On one is a hotel so low-profile that you feel you should approach it by stealth or it will lie in the bush. This is Petit Bacaye, situated down a track, off a track, off a side road surfaced with sharp loose stones, off the pot-holed road to Grenville, about ten kilometres from Pointe Salines airport.

Petit Bacaye is a beach compound about the size of a football pitch, hacked out of the bush and taking its name from an islet. This can be swum to at any time and waded to at low tide. Showers of egrets roost on it, their white plumage in the trees like blossom, seeming to reflect the wild frangipani blooming on the headland that makes the fourth side of the compound.

From where I peered out, like a sheepdog through the heavy fringe of palm leaves that roofed my little wooden cottage, I saw the owner in his little wooden bar/office kitchen, simultaneously pouring drinks, cooking a meal and paying some fishermen for the snapper he was frying. This beach is the permanent mooring for the boats of eight or ten fishermen and they have built a shed for their gear.

There is a spread of tamarinds and 40 coconut palms, sometimes connected by hammocks, with another 20 like a row of guards confronting the thick bush massed on the frontier, patrolled by a stocky heron. There is a nice row of sisal already six feet high and three large cast-iron "cop-

pers", relics of the sugar plantations, where they were used to haul cane juice, now adapted as lily ponds and exhalant a subtle fragrance. The plants share the water with small fish whose job is to counter attack any invasion by mosquitoes.

The unpredictable asset of Petit Bacaye is the interest of its casual encounters. Almost anybody who can find it is worth knowing.

Thus, for instance, Telfor Bedeau shows up, leading a hiking group of four. He has taken them up to the Seven Falls for a swim in the pool below. Some of his hikes are tougher, like that to the top of Mt Catherine. He warns tyros that it will be hot, sticky, muddy and steep. He carries a cutlass in a sheath held together with wire and often cuts his own trails.

Now 56, he has been doing this since 1962 when he led four friends to the top. Thirty years on, they walked the same trail in a celebratory reunion. Telfor broke his rule and let them drive to the foot, because they had all become distinguished. Grenadians with a bit of a belly. He has rowed the 56 miles round Grenada in "two sittings" in a boat of his own making, and says he is the only person he knows who boats for pleasure, as distinct from fishing and carrying tourists.

If the beaches seem under-used, says Telfor, that is because two out of three Grenadians cannot swim. However, on the evidence of Petit Bacaye, fishing is a better use for a beach.

ALEX HAMILTON

CARIBBEAN FACT FILE

■ The author travelled with Harlequin Worldwide (01708 882780), which offers a week at Coco Reef, Tobago, in June or July for £755 per person, including charter flights. British Airways flies to Barbados and onwards with Liat scheduled flights to Tobago, from £435.

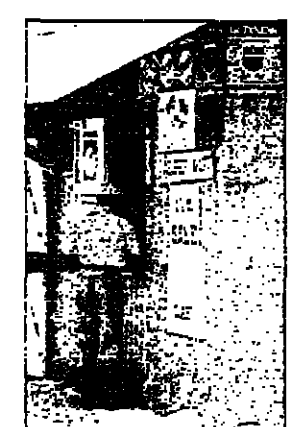
■ Getting there: BA (0345 222111) flies to Barbados and has inclusive fares onwards to Tobago, using Liat, from £601. American Airlines (0345 789789) has scheduled flights to Grenada, via New York and San Juan, from £631. The onward journey to Carriacou can be made either on a small plane with Liat (001 809 623 1838), typically an eight-seater Islander, or by ferry from St George's to Hillsborough (just turn up at the dock).

■ A week at Coco Reef and a second week at the Calabash Hotel, Grenada, costs from £1,672. Harlequin can also arrange two nights at the Silver Beach in Carriacou (001 809 443 7337) for £105 per person, including flights from Grenada. The hotel charges about £50 per double room per night.

■ Accommodation: Petit Bacaye (001 809 443 2902) in Grenada, which recently changed ownership, charges £96 for a double room, £83 for a single.

■ Visas are not required at any of these islands. The US dollar is the most useful currency.

■ Reading: The Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5261) recommends: *Snowflakes in the Caribbean*, by Jean Buffong (Women's Press, £6.99); *Ways of Sunlight*, by Samuel Selvon (Longmans, £6.50); *The South East Caribbean*, (Cadogan, £9.99).



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The ideal way to explore the Galapagos is by sea and our 7 night exploration cruise aboard the *Polaris* offers a comprehensive itinerary and a wonderfully comfortable air-conditioned base. Accommodating just 80 passengers, the *Polaris* is large enough to operate in remote environments in comfort, yet small enough to enter ports and narrow inlets inaccessible to larger ships. She carries a fleet of motorised landing craft called Zodiacs, which can be launched at a moment's notice and allow us to land on remote and out of the way beaches with great ease. In addition *Polaris* has her own glass-bottomed boat, making the undersea world accessible to all.

On board there is a wide choice of inviting public areas including the Observation Lounge, where most evenings passengers gather for a briefing or recap on the day with the expedition team and guest naturalists.



In addition there is an excellently stocked library and spacious and comfortable deck areas. The Lookout Point is always popular, offering as it does excellent bird's eye views and nearby the Bridge is open to all as the vessel operates an 'open bridge' policy.

Polaris has a fine reputation as a top notch expedition ship and nowhere is this more true than in the attractive dining room. The galley, only having to prepare food for a maximum of eighty passengers, is able to produce delicious meals which are served leisurely in a single sitting.

All the cabins have outside views, are well planned and offer all you could require for the cruise.

The atmosphere is relaxed and informal. There is no need for dressy clothing of any kind, even for dinner. The small complement of like-minded travellers encourages a spirit of camaraderie and a sense of shared

adventure. The guest and local onboard naturalists contribute enormously to your understanding of this world in microcosm.

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1997/8
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November 6, 20
December 18
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FOR FURTHER DETAILS

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WORD WATCHING

Answers from page 27
GROAK

(c) To hang around in a meaningful way watching others eat and drink in a pointed manner, hoping to be invited to join them. The phenomenon is depressingly common in the bars of London clubs. A good name for a young relative's boyfriend. "How is your galactophagous groak these days, Elizabeth?" you ask her.

ZZUOANW

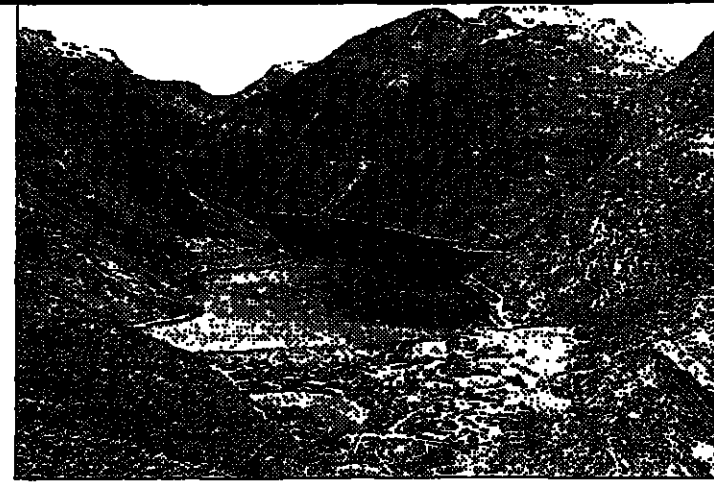
(a) A Maori drum. A winning word in Scrabble. The technique is to save up, at all costs, the letters Z, X, J, O and W, plus blanks for the second Z and any others that you fail to acquire. Then wait for a dangling AN on which you can build. Then strike. You will usually lose. But it will be worth it for the occasion when you put the letters down, and the appeals to the reference books that will follow.

ABLIGURITION

(a) Extravagance in cooking and serving food, like one's granny, who took the refusal of a second helping as an insult. "So wise of you to have proposed to Patience, Augustus. Abliguration is such a comfortable virtue in a fiancée."

JUBATE

(a) Fringed with long, hanging hairs, such as a horse's mane. From the Latin *luba* a mane. "I see that you are becoming ever more jubate with the passing years, Jones. Have you achieved Rastafarianism yet? Or are you aiming at full equinisation?"



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ATOL 264

Turkey: An able seaman enjoys a spell of flotilla sailing but a novice finds himself capsizing a catamaran

Nelson couldn't have been prouder

Ahmet wore voluminous Ali Baba trousers and a fish impaled sideways through his skull. "Is a hat," he explained, scratching himself with vigour and grinning broadly. Reasons of personal hygiene, we were told, cause many Turkish men to shave areas which other Europeans let flourish. The resulting seven o'clock shadow may itch. Clearly, Ahmet aimed to be the entertainer as well as engineer and general handyman to our four-strong flotilla of powerboats moored in the busy marina of Marmaris on Turkey's Mediterranean coast.

The plan was to sail in convoy to various small ports and anchorages along the coast and explore the remains that passing civilisations have left there. Our base would be a ten metre long Bayliner powerboat, spacious, comfortable, well-equipped and capable of licking along at more than 20 knots between stops. We would cover far more in a week than can ever be achieved under sail.

One boat acting as pilot had Noel as captain and overall commander-in-chief of the flotilla. Our boat, *Tropical Dawn*, had four novices on board. A couple from Yorkshire and a Belgian detective and his girlfriend sailed the other two vessels.

On the face of it, steering a powerboat may seem rather easier than driving a car. The road is immensely wide save where it narrows through harbour entrances and other obstacles: the skipper simply presses a starter button, two enormous nostrils in the stern emit a whiff of smoke, the throttle opens with a satisfying snarl from the twin diesels and after casting off the lines, away we go. The helmsman stands on a lofty bridge, master, he

FACT FILE

■ The author travelled with Sunshine Cruising, Bradstone House, Middle Wall, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1BF (01227 776677). A four-berth flotilla cruiser costs from £2,425 a week. Flights are from £169.

hopes, of all there is to survey. Noel gave a comprehensive briefing, after which we all tucked away our fenders and were soon racing south across the bay, bows surging like the heads of horses in a cavalry charge. We slowed towards our first anchorage at Kumlu Buku and the pilot boat led the way in. Ahmet suddenly appeared on our bridge. "I help," he declared and after a tentative scratch began vigorous manipulation of the throttle and wheel.

The problem with a large power boat is that at slow speed it behaves rather like a brakeless lorry travelling through an oil spill. They have minimal keel and no rudder and rely on engine thrust to hold direction. The only way to stop is to slam the whole thing into reverse. Obviously the potential for accidents with novices in charge is high.

We were quickly moored. Ahmet disappeared again with a gesture suggesting I had done everything very neatly. The flotilla lay in Holland Bay at Kumlu Buku, so-called because a restaurant there is run by Ahmet, the Hollander, a Dutch Turk. This was our first taste of Turkish cuisine. Restaurants along the coast specialise in nothing else since tourism is happily unso-

phisticated. Some are quite grand, others gently ramshackle, all we patronised were excellent. Turkish restaurateurs produce lamb in an ingenious variety of ways. Despite the proximity to the sea, which lapped against some restaurants, fish is expensive.

The form is to be invited into the restaurant kitchen to select whatever looks good. The *shish kebab* was excellent and we tried *ic pilav* (rice with raisins and onions) and *cacik* (cucumber in garlic-yoghurt).

With Turkey being a largely Islamic country there is a theoretical thumbs down for alcohol but Turks have a pragmatic approach and produce some excellent and cheaply-priced wines. During our cruise several bottles of *yakur Kavakdere* or *Dolusu* went down with the sunset. *Raki*, a mixture of grape-based gin with anise turned milky with a splash of water, was also a refreshing aperitif though it was the powerful Turkish coffee drunk black that left me trembling.

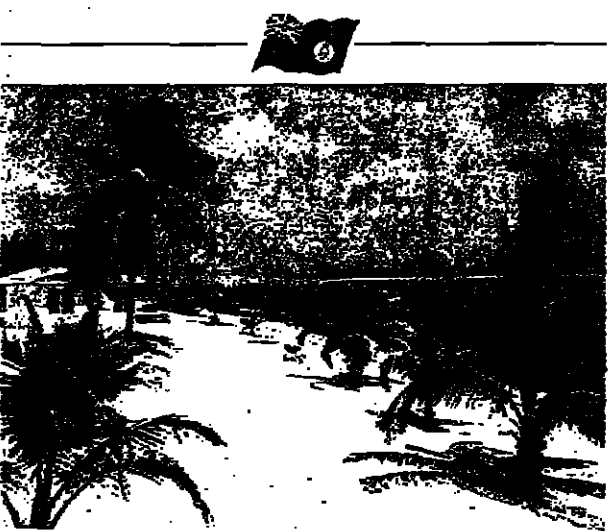
With wine at £2 a bottle, a meal worked out at £15 per person. Although there seemed to be an unspoken obligation to eat out "en flotilla", the boats have well equipped galleys and there is ample produce in the markets of Fethiye, Goeck and Marmaris.

Next morning dawned with fat calm reflecting the pale light like a mirror, making it difficult to see where sky and sea met. Well away from the shore the four boats paused to pump out tanks a daily chore and the nautical equivalent of taking a dog for a walk. Then it was full throttle to the next destination leaving a fleecy-plume behind each boat.

The Turkish coast is strewn with Roman and Byzantine remains; even the centre of Fethiye has yielded a Roman amphitheatre which archaeologists are patiently reconstructing. We anchored at Elcinik and went on boats up the reed-choked Dalyan river to the ancient city of Caunus where there are tombs dating from the 4th century BC.

Dolphins raced us to a point on the coast where a valley opens into a bay. In fine weather the valley is choked with butterflies but rain was pouring and the place was deserted. It poured all the way back to Marmaris where, alone on the bridge, I reversed into a gap between gulets and fixed the lines before a fish-impaled head appeared. "You done good. Very good," Ahmet said. Could Nelson have felt more proud? I doubt it.

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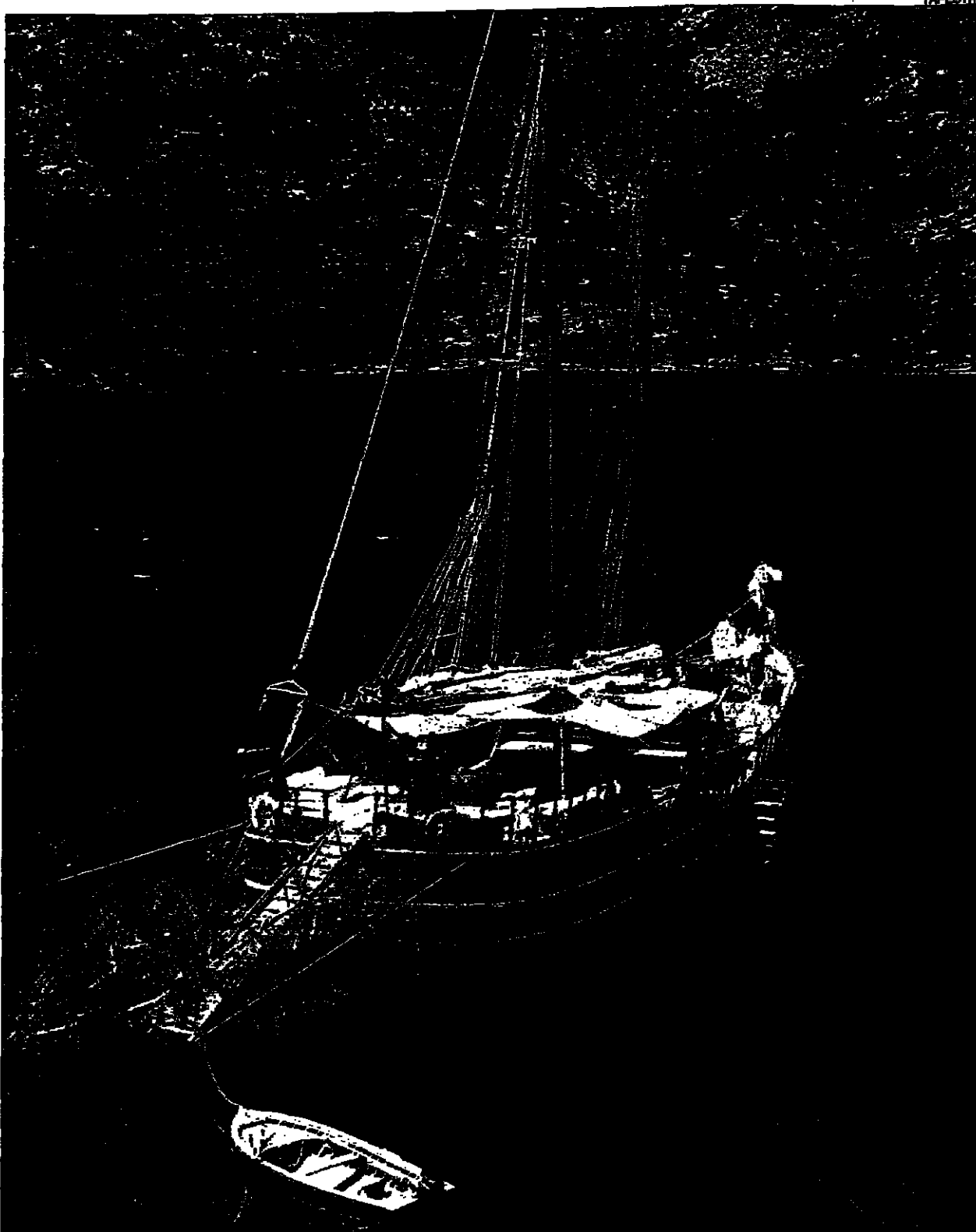
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Gulets were boats originally designed for sponge divers and fishermen but they have been regenerated for tourists

Sitting on the deck of a wooden motor-cruiser, silently moored for the night in a Turkish bay, and nursing a cool tumbler of raki while a culinary genius called Ali bakes the fat octopuses that his friend Mehmet had harpooned that morning, you cannot help wondering what exactly is wrong with "boaty" people.

Among holidays offered in Greece and Turkey by *Sunsail*, perhaps the most paradoxical is that which puts you, for the first week, in its sailing club at Perili on the edge of the bay of Datca, no more than a hefty stone-skip from the Greek island of Simi; and, for the second week, on a gulet, a boat originally designed for sponge-divers and fishermen, now regenerated for tourism.

The first week left me bewildered. I have never been a sailor but I had imagined it would not matter. The sailing club sits in a beautiful bay and comprises a scattering of small white buildings that creep up a rocky hillside. At the foot of the hill is the beach, empty but for the racks of dinghies and windsurfers, and the tanned and toned bodies of the English staff who are rigging boats, joshing with each other and looking like film extras as they flash their pearly teeth and shake their sun-bleached hair. Beyond that is a bay where trim sails scud harm-

lessly back and forth in tranquil figures-of-eight.

There is an open-air bamboo bar, and a restaurant where the food is of a hybrid Mediterranean style, designed to appeal to palates unhappy with anything that wriggles or swims, and the booze is cheap.

After 9am, however, the place is empty. The lean, brown instructors disappear and with them the faint, pinker majority. They all go sailing. All day. On the first morning I found myself quite alone. There had been some talk of lessons the night before, and of Toppers and Lasers and Wayfarers and Darts, and any number of yachts. But I just thought, I would stay home with the landlubbers.

There weren't any. And so, to show willing, I sank a Topper, and then a Wayfarer. And then I went out with two extremely competent men in a Laser and turned that over as well. Finally, I was taken out in a catamaran by the best sailor of all, who had never

turned one over, and when he made me stand on the edge of the boat and lean out to balance the pull of the sail, I capsize that, too.

Meanwhile, everyone else raved about the equipment, and the skill of the staff, and spun nautical yarns over cocktails into the small hours.

I tried a few more times, sitting alone in a motionless dinghy, facing into the wind while the sails flapped, and being gently buffeted about the head by the boom; then, when an instructor nearby shouted, "Get ready to gybe", I turned to ask him what he meant and was whirled out into the Med. That evening I retired from sailing for good. On the last morning I sank a canoe.

Once aboard the gulet, however, things immediately looked up. The round Captain Mehmet invited us aboard his boat, a pretty wooden thing that slept 12, with a living room, dining and, snoozing

area at the back and tanning space up front. For the next seven days we cruised the Mediterranean while Ali cooked, Mustapha made the cocktails and danced to doozy Turkish pop music, and we swam and slept, or disembarked and got ripped off in carpet shops, or walked inland to swim in waterfalls.

After the exertions of the first week, where motion on water was a slippery thing dependent on one's ability to execute expert advice, this half of the holiday, in which an old sea dog plotted the course and did the sailing, was all the sweeter. The option to sail was still there, with Toppers and windsurfers on board and a *Sunsail* rep ever willing to assist. But roles were reversed. Returning to the boat after a

Throw away my sailor suit

day pottering in the ruins at Otricoli, where Praxiteles sculpted his Aphrodite, or swimming naked in a secluded bay, it was those life-jacketed unfortunates who had remained to practise their tacking or their trapezing who had missed the best of the day.

In the end, though, nobody misses out. For the first week you are cosseted by English staff and earn your evenings of relaxation by your own efforts. In the second week you are among Turks and there is no daily effort at all. You get your eating and reading and swimming for free.

Since my holiday, *Sunsail* has started offering gulet trips without the condition of a week of the skid-pan. Now where is the fun in that?

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AROUND THE WORLD: A WEEKEND GUIDE

BUDGET GUIDE BOOKS

Spend a penny in the triangle

IF YOU WANT to spend a penny in the Baltics, always — or be equipped with the latest Lonely Planet Guide. The latter M, the guide explains, identifies the pennies in Estonia and Russia, but it's a V in Latvia and Lithuania.

Ladies must follow N in Estonia, S in Latvia and then it's back to M again in Lithuania. Just to complete the confusion, some lavatories sport an upside-down triangle for men, and a triangle the right way up for women.

Such nuggets of information, plus a host of travel tips to help save the precious zlotys and forints are crammed into Lonely Planet's new series of *Shoestring Guides to Europe* aimed at budget travellers. From the best fish and chip shop in Galway to the best "drunken fish soup" in Balaton; how to get VAT refunds in Slovakia or prevent over-zealous Czech waiters whisking your plate away — it's all there.

In *Scandinavia & Baltic Europe on a Shoestring*, the slimmest volume with 570 pages, there is vital information on how to exist on a no-frills daily budget of 275 kroner (about £27) by avoiding alcohol, meals in hotels apart from all-you-can-eat buffet breakfasts, and even the coin-operated laundries.

New sections in each volume, the top ten and bottom ten, reflect the authors' personal views, which are entertaining — if also prejudiced and occasionally inconsistent. Thus the delightful Palma in Majorca is given the thumbs down in Mediterranean Europe's bottom ten (along with the Greek island of Kos and the Casino at Monte Carlo), although the Majorcan capital is later described as a "pleasant town worth exploring".

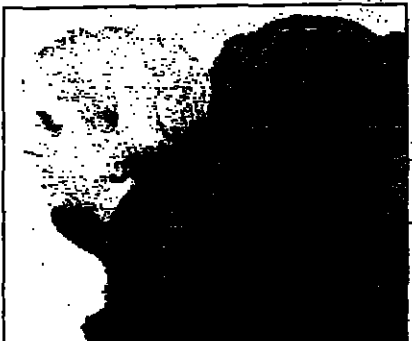
A BLANKET condemnation of France's north coast in the bulky (3,322-page) Western Europe guide completely ignores such treats as Dieppe, while approving "the Alps". This suggests the author had never seen the purpose-built French mountain resorts which have all the cosy charm of giant oil refineries.

Black marks are also awarded to British coastal resorts (the 10th, Munich's Bierfest, Prague in high season, the tacky resort of Siófok on Hungary's Lake Balaton along with the Magyars' schmaltzy music, Santa Claus's home in Finland, Denmark's Legoland without kids and seal clubbing displays at the Polar Museum in Tromsø).

Full marks, though, to Lonely Planet for a good read and priceless information, plus maps that do not fall out just as you are about to board the bus.

JILL CRAWSHAW

• Western Europe on a Shoestring (£14.99); Mediterranean Europe on a Shoestring (£14.99); Eastern Europe on a Shoestring (£14.99); Central Europe on a Shoestring (£14.99); Scandinavia & Baltic Europe on a Shoestring (£11.99).



Valuable advice for budget travellers



Aboriginal from the Tanami Desert in Australia's Northern Territory; young travellers can learn about tribal mythology and bush medicine in the outback

Time for a real adventure or two

STA TRAVEL, which specialises in the young independent market, will whet the appetites of adventurous travellers with its range of interesting holiday ideas in a free publication, *Grigrid Level*. Suggestions include feluca trips down the Nile, kibbutz fly drives, trans-Siberia rail journeys, bungee jumping at Victoria Falls, and tribal mythology, bush medicine and hunting in the Australian outback.

Useful nuts-and-bolts information on cheap flights, accommodation and travel passes helps with the budgeting.

The guide is available from local branches of STA or by telephoning 0171-361 6166.

Non-inclusive

THE growing number of all-inclusive holidays are given a rough ride in the current *Holiday Which?* whose subscribers have complained that many "free" facilities advertised did not materialise or at best were of poor quality.

A party of holidaymakers expecting free table tennis, archery, pistol and rifle shooting, aerobics, volleyball, water polo, pétanque, football and darts were told four days before departure that only table tennis, aerobics and darts were available. The promised barbecue was also cancelled.

To get your money's worth, concludes *Holiday Which?*, you will probably need to stay in your hotel complex most of the time, suggesting that these so-called all-

in luxury packages may be little more than full board plus drinks.

ALTHOUGH many organisations have tried to charter the *Orient Express* for their millennium celebrations, VSOE (0171-805 5100) is hoping to run its own five-day party for 180 or so passengers following the original Constantinople route as closely as possible through Paris, Central and Eastern Europe to Istanbul. Prices and details have not yet been finalised by VSOE but should be announced soon.

Days in Paris

THE Air Travel Group's City Escapes (0181-563 8959) has expanded its city break programme from 35 destinations.

Using its links with Le Meridien and Forte hotels, the firm can organise breaks to cities as far away as Amman and Bahrain, Dubai and Damascus, Montreal and Washington, with hotels and flights individually priced. Thus a Dubai break costs from £50 per night B&B at the Meridien Jumeira Beach, with flights an additional £399.

The popular destinations continue to be Paris, Rome and Amsterdam, with a two-night break in Paris starting at £119. A special celebration break which includes an evening at the Opera, a night in Le Meridien Etrole, travelling out by Eurostar and back by Orient Express, costs from £414.

JILL CRAWSHAW'S TRAVEL TIPS

To Abu Simbel

REPAIRS to the road to Abu Simbel are likely to cause disruption for travellers between May and October; the Egyptian Tourist Office claims the route will not be closed, although traffic will be reduced to about 35mph with priority for tourist buses. Egypt Air will increase the frequency of its flights to Abu Simbel from Aswan, with fares reduced from \$145 (about £93) to \$107 (£69).

Bales Tours (01306 885991) recommends the 40-minute flight rather than the four-hour each way coach journey. The firm's day excursion costs £95, which includes the flight and entrance fees to Ramses II's great Sun Temple. This was spectacularly raised and reassembled between 1964-68 during the flooding of Lake Nasser.

SWEDISH homeowners are signing up for a new agency providing B&B accommodation in Stockholm, with rooms from £18 a night. In 1998 the city becomes the Cultural Capital of Europe. Contact the Bed and Breakfast Service Stockholm (0046 8 660 5565).

Stepping out

HISTORIC walks in the footsteps of the great and the not-so-good, led by guides, are being organised this summer by Intravel (01653 628811). Accommodation ranges from three-star hotels to simple mountain refuges.

The walk called In Whympers' Footsteps Around the Matterhorn follows the

tracks of a young Englishman from Breuil-Cervinia in Italy to Zermatt in Switzerland as he made his final plans to conquer the peak in 1865. The week's tour costs £889. The Viking Kings' Route is along an ancient trail used by the Norwegians on a journey in 1097; this walk costs £398.

Smugglers carrying contraband into Spain, as well as British POWs escaping across the Pyrenees took high mountain routes in Catalonia. The Cerdagne to Canigou Smugglers' Walk costs £760. All prices include flights, half-board and picnic lunches.

Out of term

MORE than 60 universities and colleges can provide useful and attractive accommodation during the long student vacations. Oxford and Cambridge, many colleges in and around London, the University of Kent at Canterbury, the University of Sussex at Brighton, Edinburgh and St Andrews in Scotland and Bangor and Aberystwyth in Wales are included in the list.

In many cases, sporting and other facilities are also available.

A night's B&B at London's King's College costs from £17, while Exeter charges £12.50 a night, £19 with en-suite bathroom; a self-contained self-catering flat for a maximum of four people costs from £24 a week. In Edinburgh, B&B is £24 a night per person, £45 with en-suite bathroom, while a self-catering flat for a maximum of five people costs £285.

For further information contact the British Universities Accommodation Consortium (0115-950 4571) or write to: BUAC, Box 1496, University Park Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

No Mickey Mouse voyages

Disney's latest venture is Caribbean cruises

Disney this week gave the first public viewing of its purpose-built cruise liner, *Disney Magic*, when it was floated out of the Sincaneri shipyards outside Venice in preparation for its maiden voyage early next year. The ship will be the first of two liners (*Disney Wonder* is due to come into service late next year) which will combine short Caribbean cruises with a stay at Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

Interest from British holidaymakers is already strong, according to Andy Noble of tour operator Bridge Travel Group, which is the first UK operator to take bookings for the cruise liner. "With the upsurge in demand for all types of cruise holidays, it is perhaps not surprising that a Disney-quality cruise venture is likely to prove popular," he says. "But it will be pitched at the upper end of the market."

A seven-day combination holiday of three or four days on *Disney Magic* and the balance at Disney World starts at £818 for adults, including flights, staying at a mid-price Disney hotel and in a standard cabin. Top of the range in a royal suite on board ship with accommodation at the Grand Floridian Hotel in Disney World costs from £1,571 for adults for cruises starting in mid-April next year. The price for children (aged 2-11) sharing their parents' cabin is a flat rate £796 irrespective of grade.

Children, not surprisingly, are particularly targeted by Disney, which claims to have allocated about ten times the space (15,000 square feet) for children's activities compared with similar-sized liners. More importantly, it has segmented children's activities according to age and likely interests: under-eights, have a play area themed to Captain Hook's ship involving physical activity, and fantasy play; nine to 12-year-olds have large-screen interactive video games and teenagers get a "hang-out" space close in the activity pool, themed like the New York coffee bar in the American TV comedy *Friends*.

Adults have their own "play" areas as well: an adults-only pool, three nightspots and a restaurant (one of the four on board), plus a child-free beach on Disney's 1,000-acre island in the Bahamas for stopovers. There will be no casino as this would be contrary to Disney's family image, but Broadway-style shows, films and games. Disney believes it will gain a niche in the Caribbean cruise market.

DAVID CHURCHILL

• Disney Information (0900 200 605); Bridge Travel Group (01992 456101).



Most activities are geared to children

From John Douce, Coventry: We took a Caribbean cruise with Norwegian Cruise Line and found the company's attitude to taking drink on board aggressive and objectionable. Hand baggage was examined and all bottles were taken into bond for the duration of the cruise. Passengers who took a special drink with them because of the limited choice on board were similarly deprived. I would not object if this policy were stated in the brochure but we were informed only with delivery of our tickets a few days before departure, when it was incorrectly stated that this was part of the contract of passage.



Norwegian Cruise Line comments: Our policy is shared by many of our competitors. We had a number of incidents of under-age drinking in cabins and moved towards our position at the end of last year. It is part of our contract of passage, which is on the tickets. With hindsight, we should have put details in our brochure. Our 1998 brochure is out in July and will include details of our policy.

• We welcome letters on holiday travel. Send them to: Letters, Travel Department, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN or fax 0171-782 5124.

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• Kasadasi, Turkey for Ephesus. • Athens, Greece for City tour & Acropolis and return flight to UK.

The above gives just a brief outline. In most ports of call there is a choice of excursions available.

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Britain: Get your kicks on Route 1, the new Hull to Harwich section of the National Cycle Network

Life cycles in the slow lanes

The sound of my bike wheels on the fine gravel of the path was satisfyingly crunchy as I bowled along the converted railway line through Raydon Great Wood. The sun flickered through the foliage of ivy, freshly green with the soft newness of spring leaves, and glinted on the shiny yellow petals of celandines nesting in the rich foliage of the verge.

Ahead of me an animal bounded out of the grass, its tail flowing. At first I took it to be a squirrel but, after a longer look, realised it was a stoat and stopped abruptly. The creature danced towards me. Moving with a relaxed, loose-limbed, giddy gait which belied its careful control and fierce concentration, it skittered from one side of the path to the other. Then, just a few yards from me, it slipped seamlessly into the grass and out of sight. I put my feet back on the pedals and crunched on.

This is the essence of a Sustrans cycle route. My favourite sections are the off-road bits and I delight in riding these special paths, untainted by traffic, deep into beautiful countryside. The path through Raydon Great Wood, to the southeast of Hadleigh in Suffolk, now forms part of Sustrans' "Interim Route 1" from Hull to Harwich, which opens tomorrow and is another section of the rapidly growing National Cycle Network.

This exciting project, supported by the Millennium Commission and being assembled by Sustrans in partnership with local authorities and others, will give the UK a minimum of 6,500 miles of signed, high-quality cycle routes by 2005. More than half of the network will use traffic-calmed urban roads and lightly trafficked country lanes while the remainder is to be on forest roads, converted railway lines, canal by-paths and bridleways. By providing safe cycle routes, people may be persuaded to use bikes for shorter journeys as a sustainable form of transport, thus reducing car emissions and improving health. But I just love the routes for the chance to bike in safety through little-known countryside.

Armed with Sustrans's route maps and a copy of the *Hull to Harwich Cycle Route Holiday Planner*, I loaded my bike onto the train to Hull. The panniers were bulging, the tyres firm and the water bottle full. I had no fears for the bike as it had been serviced recently — it was my own fitness I doubted.

Inwardly, I thanked heaven that the majority of the route was going to be flat or, at worst, gently undulating. But, while variations to the vertical scale are strictly limited, the route is far from straight and meanders from high-

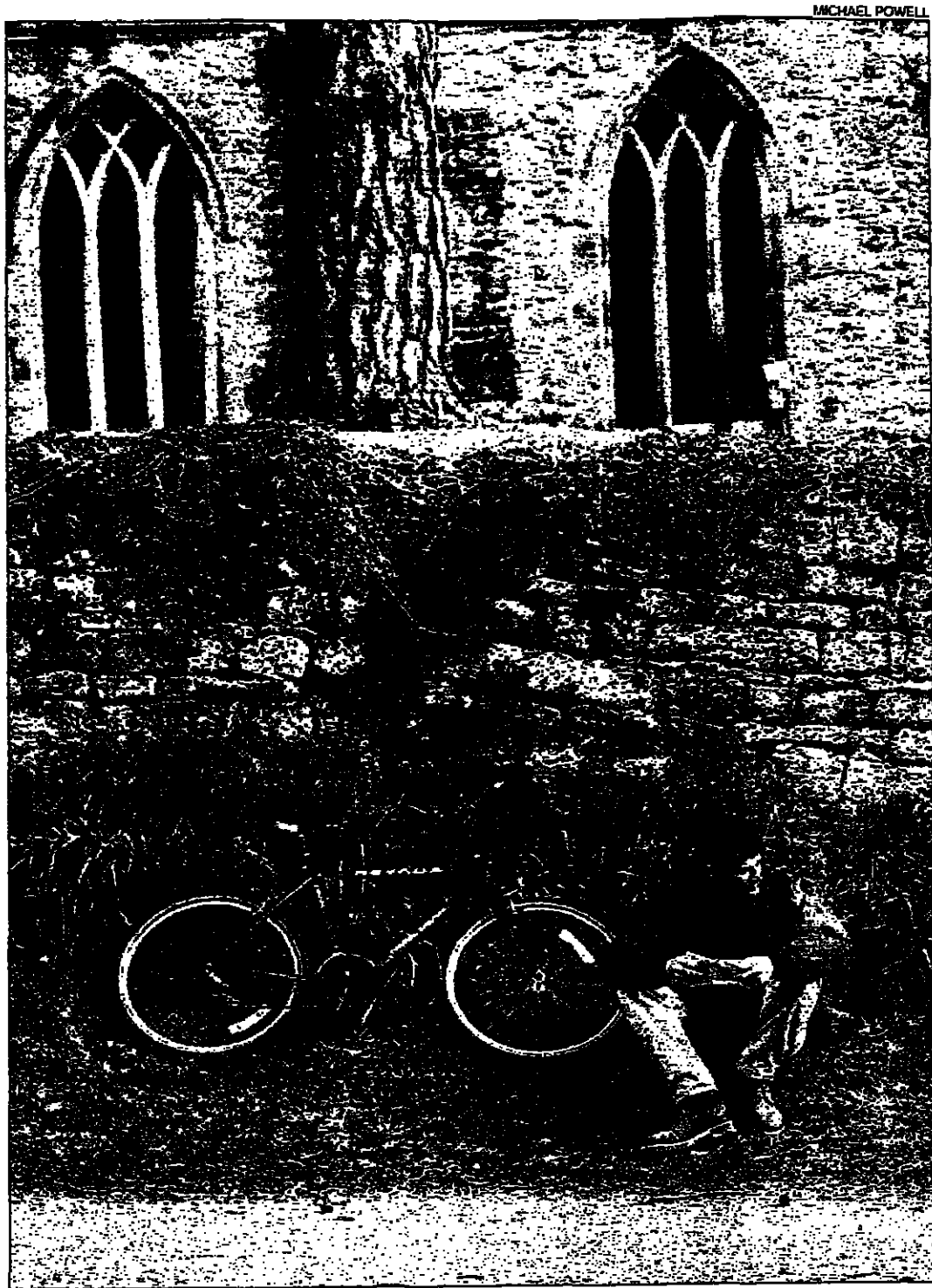
to the underlying geology. Around Sandringham, for instance, many of the house walls are built from thin, flat, biscuit-coloured cart stone, as if made of broken digestives. Further south flint takes over while, on the border between Suffolk and Essex, black weatherboarding and thatch hold sway.

Much of the countryside is surprisingly unoccupied and when I stopped for a breather after climbing to occasional high points, the views were often remarkably free of buildings. This is partly explained by the number of extensive estates, of which Sandringham is the most notable, and the route took me past its main entrance. But Route 1 is also regularly punctuated by villages which, together with the numerous places of interest on the way and the general flatness of the terrain, makes it ideal for family cycling.

I looked forward to the villages as places to stop for rest and refreshment and quickly became a connoisseur of the freshly made sandwich, the sticky bun and the chocolate flapjack. I can recommend Groom's Bakery in Burnham Market and Crocodile in Norwich's Tombland. But the one shop which promises to profit mightily from the opening of Route 1 is Reads The Bakers on the road into Framlingham. Its rooftop extruders pour enticing aromas into the faces of oncoming pedalers and only the iron-willed (certainly not me) could pass it by.

In the midst of thousands of fertile acres, many of the small towns have excellent produce markets. Asparagus, plump and newly picked, was too delicate to squeeze into a packed pannier. Fresh sea food, especially Cromer crab, was also a feature of these markets, a reminder that the sea is often just a few miles away.

And Route 1 took me there, or at least to tidal estuaries. Woodbridge with its white clapboard buildings and mud flats packed with boats and piping oyster catchers sticks in the mind, as does Wells-next-the-Sea. I had to make a slight detour to reach Wells but it was worth it. Narrow streets of brightly painted



Taking a bike break: a pause at Walesby, near Market Rasen, on the Hull to Harwich route

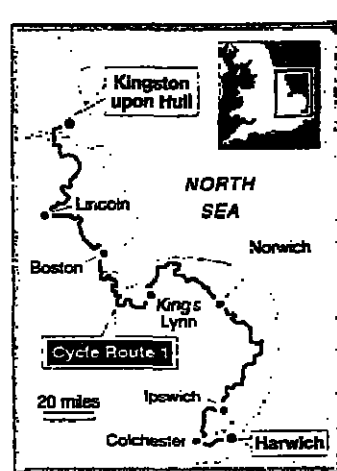
houses led me down to the water, although it took a further kilometre of serious, head-down pedalling in the face of a stiff northerly to reach the sea proper, the worst wind of the whole ride. Later, I coasted back along the sea wall with the sun gleaming blindingly off the exposed mud to sit on the quay and enjoy an ice-cream.

But if I had to choose a favourite

town it would have to be Beccles. I was impressed by St Peter's House, my hotel there, where I ate a delicious meal and drank coffee in a drawing room decorated in ornate Strawberry Hill Gothic. I appreciated the efforts of the local council for including bike-locking facilities in keeping with the street furniture. I enjoyed visiting St Michael's church described by

Arthur Ransome in *Coot Club* as being built "in two bits, the tower in one bit and the rest of the church in another". And, finally, there was the sign outside a local pub: "Parking for Loaves and Fishes Only". Perhaps they will include bikes too now that Route 1 is about to open.

MICHAEL WOODS



FACT FILE

■ The high standard of National Cycle Network routes usually means that they can be cycled using almost any machine, from a mountain bike to a small-wheeled bicycle such as a Pashley Land-Rover or even a folding Brompton. The most important thing is to have luggage space — let the bike do the carrying — a comfortable saddle and a water bottle. I covered 60 miles a day, which is too high a mileage for a relaxing holiday, especially with children. Half that distance each day will make a comfortable fortnight or you can join and leave the route at one of several railway stations on the way.

■ Places to stay with facilities for bikes are contained in the guide and include: Quality Royal Hotel, Fersway, Hull (01482 325087), from £34; Castle Hotel, Westgate, Lincoln (01522 538801), from £35; White Hart Hotel, Bridge Foot, Boston (01205 364577), from £24.75; Russet House Hotel, Goodwins Road, King's Lynn (01553 773098), from £23; the Crown, Market Place, Fakenham (01328 851488), from £28; St Peter's House, Old Market, Beccles (01502 713203), from £20; Tamarisk House, Sandy Lane, Barham, Ipswich (01473 831825), from £15. All prices are for bed and breakfast per night based on two people sharing.

■ The two route maps — *Hull to Fakenham* and *Fakenham to Harwich* — are available from Sustrans Information Service, PO Box 21, Bristol BS99 2HA (0117 929 0888), at a cost of £5.99 each plus £1.50 p&p, whether you buy one or both. *Hull to Harwich Cycle Route Holiday Planner* (£5 incl. p&p) is available from Lincolnshire Tourism, Lincoln Castle, Lincoln LN1 3AA (01522 526450), which co-ordinates accommodation bookings for the route.

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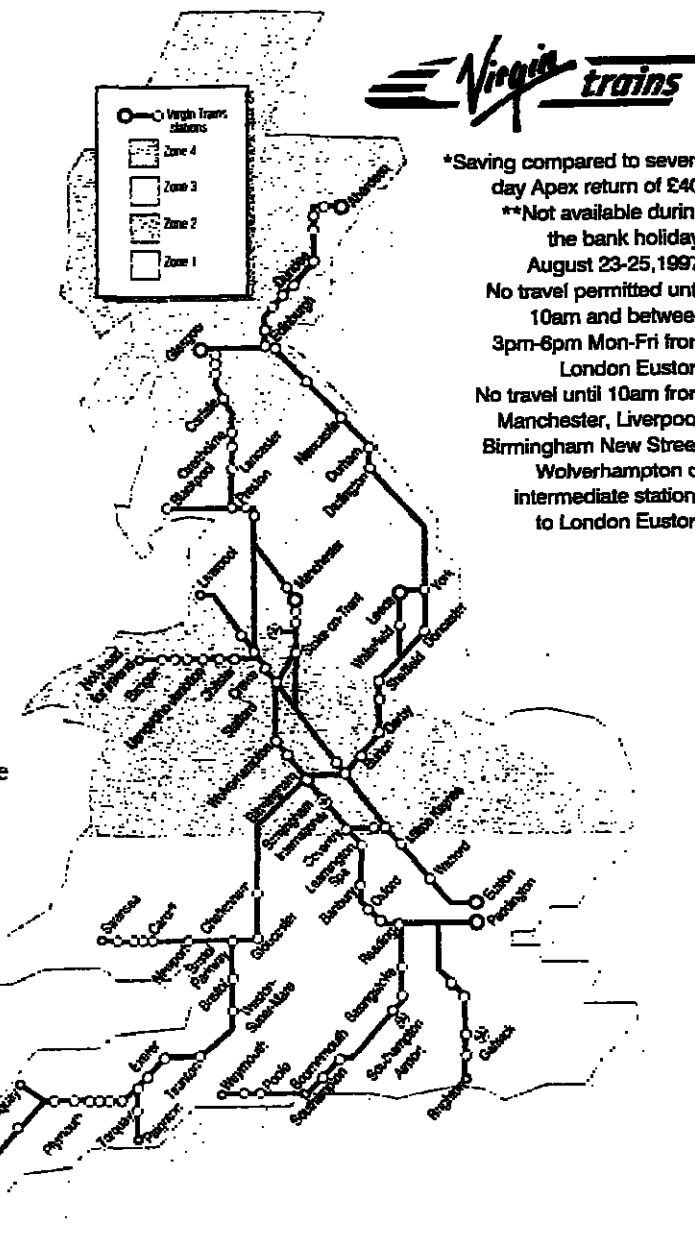
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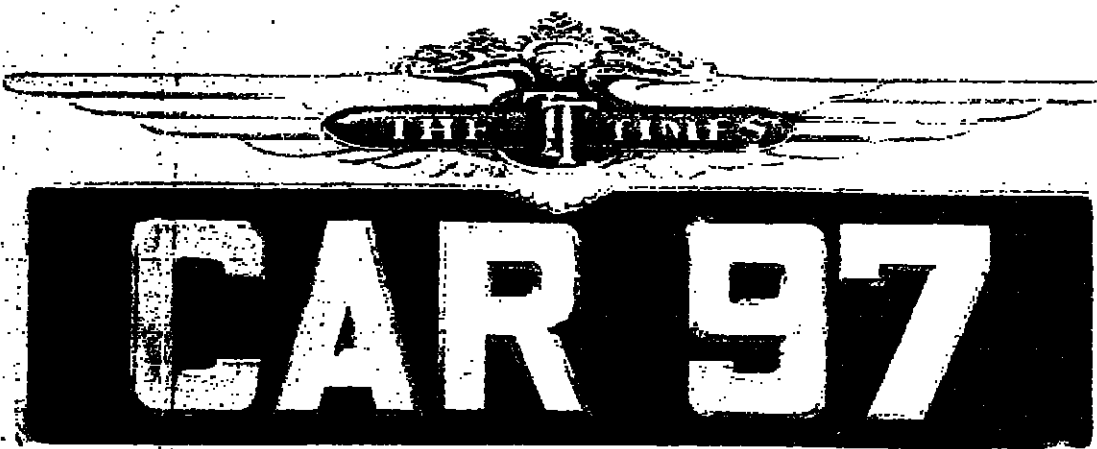
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Page 3



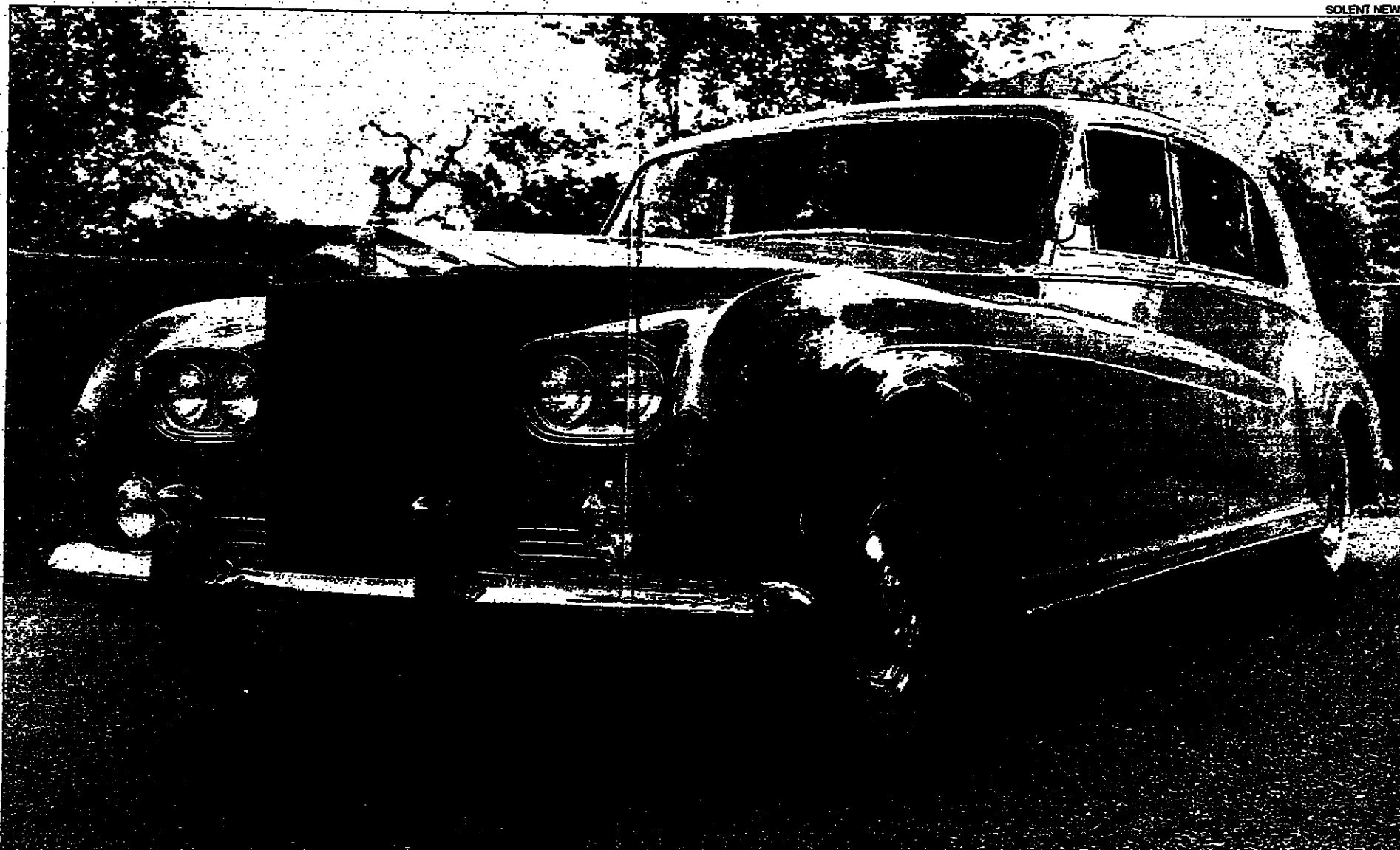
Learn to fix your engine in the kitchen

Page 10



SATURDAY MAY 17 1997

What else for the King but a car fit for royalty? Now Elvis's Phantom V is being restored in Britain, reports Kevin Eason



Elvis paid the list price of £6,335 for what was the ultimate luxury limousine in 1963, then spent another £2,000 personalising the Phantom with his own essential equipment

A legendary rocker's Roller

Waiting its passenger, the car with the magic carpet ride is fit for a King of rock'n'roll, anyway.

The young Elvis Presley might have been "All Shook Up, ahuhuh," on disc, but not on the road, when he was being transported in his glorious Rolls-Royce. Even if a draught did manage to disturb his carefully Brylcreemed quiff, there was no need for the King to worry about his crown: a brush was handily secreted in the armrest of the huge Phantom V.

Don Fisk found the brush at the start of an eight-month restoration of the Phantom, which has curiously found its way back to Britain 34 years after Elvis bought it.

"The car went through a mysterious period when we don't really know where it was," says Don, who is carrying out the £16,000 restoration with his brother, Trevor. "It came to us through a contact who we have done other restorations for, notably the James Bond Aston Martin DB5. We are only a couple of weeks from completion, and this is a beautiful car."

The Phantom is now owned by a wealthy Arab who wanted to bring it back to the condition enjoyed by Elvis as he toured the United States in what was in 1963, the ultimate luxury limousine. Rolls-Royce only made the Phantom series for royalty and heads of state, though Elvis clearly qualified by virtue of the fact that he had more loyal subjects around the world than most royalty could lay claim to.

The King sat in luxury in the rear compartment, separated from his chauffeur by a glass screen as he reclined on plush dark green velvet upholstery.

We've searched for signs of him but only found some handwipes from Cincinnati

Elvis, who gave his address on the logbook as 3764 Highway, 51 South, Memphis, Tennessee, paid the list price of £6,335 but then spent another £2,000 personalising the car with his own essential equipment.

The hairbrush slides delicately into the centre armrest of the rear seat and is finished in the same oak veneer as the dashboard and rear console, which, in itself, is a world of wonder.

"The centre panel has an intercom and a telephone, which is insignificantly a neon red and has a key lock, suggesting that either Elvis had a hotline to the White House or Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis's infamous and feared manager, was trying to keep the phone bills down."

The centre armrest also housed a decanter and crystal glasses, where, no doubt, the King ensured a ready supply of liquid refreshment, though there is no sign of a separate compartment for storing the hamburgers for which he apparently had a passion.

Obviously there had to be music — in desperation, the driver could hit the horn button and five bugles under the bonnet play Colonel Bogey. He probably fancied something with a little more beat though, and the King of rock'n'roll, apparently, spent his hours in the back of his huge limousine listening to the latest sounds — possibly even

his own lyrical ditties — from that icon to technological failure: the eight-track stereo. Elvis would have had room to do The Twist or Mashed Potato in the back of the gigantic Roller. "It is huge," says Don. "You could practically hold a dance in the back, there's so much room to stretch out."

Unfortunately, there were no cassettes with the car to complete the period feel of a motor born in an altogether less complex age when the Rolls-Royce was a car only bought by the upper crust. Elvis was obviously among the upstarts of the Sixties who not only had the cash but the international clout to demand a limousine whose armchair-like seats would normally never have been within a country mile of a denim-clad poster.

"We've searched the interior for any more signs of Elvis but the only thing we could find was some handwipes from Cincinnati. The carpet is an inch thick, so you can wiggle your toes in it. This car is real luxury," says Don. "We don't know how much it would be worth, but there is a chance the Phantom will go back to the United States where there are probably lots of collectors who would like to get their hands on it. If that is the case, the sky's the limit for the price."

Originally blue, the car has been repainted in silver, 15 new coats applied at the Fisk brothers' garage in Brasted, Kent. After 1,000 hours of work, the Phantom's veneer and upholstery have been renewed so that once again the limousine would be fit for a King. And if he's reading this, perhaps he would like to get in touch so that he could sample the delights of his gorgeous Rolls-Royce once again.



"You could practically hold a dance in the back, there's so much room," says Don Fisk



Added extras: crystal decanter and glasses — and a neon red telephone with a key lock

Luxury only for those who can ride in state

Search for an adjective to describe Rolls-Royce's mighty Phantom V and the one which recurs is simply: huge.

Two inches short of 20ft long, the Phantom was built to serve the high and mighty on those state occasions after motorised transport overtook more leisurely progress by coach and horses.

Rolls-Royce restricted sales of Phantom IV series to royalty and heads of state so would-be limousine owners had to be content with the Silver Wraith. In 1959, Rolls introduced a new 6.2-litre V8 engine, which allowed the company to

discontinue the Silver Wraith and update the Phantom series.

The result was the Phantom V, which — with bodywork by Park Ward — could seat seven in ultimate comfort while the V8 could still propel the huge body to a top speed of more than 100mph and match the acceleration of its smaller sister models.

The cars are still seen carrying members of the Royal family. Rolls-Royce has discontinued the Phantom series now, acknowledging that the golden age of the state limousine is probably over. Not even pop stars want them now.



King of the road in the Sixties: Elvis with his Phantom

The eternal Elvis

FORGET the Spice Girls. Elvis was the greatest pop star of them all.

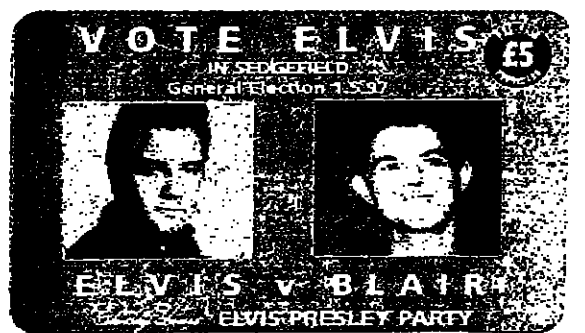
Twenty years after his death, fans are as devoted as ever to the King. They swallow up the memorabilia and still buy songs written and recorded three decades ago: restaurants have Elvis impersonators — one in London is Chinese — because diners of all ages recognise the hits such as *Love Me Tender* or *Jailhouse Rock*.

Sid Shaw, Britain's most infamous Elvis fan, even believes the Elvis Presley party should have won the

election. The latest piece of memorabilia on sale at his shop, *Elvisly Yours*, in Shorelitch, east London, features phonocards with Elvis head-to-head with Tony Blair.

Even non-Elvis fans might have welcomed Shaw's Elvis manifesto: it would include a one-hour Elvis karaoke intermission in Parliamentary debates, Forte Hotels to be renamed Heartbreak Hotels and the leader of the Opposition to wear a silver lamé suit during Prime Minister's Question Time.

Elvisly Yours: 0171-729 4217.



Election phonocard: who's that with Tony Blair?



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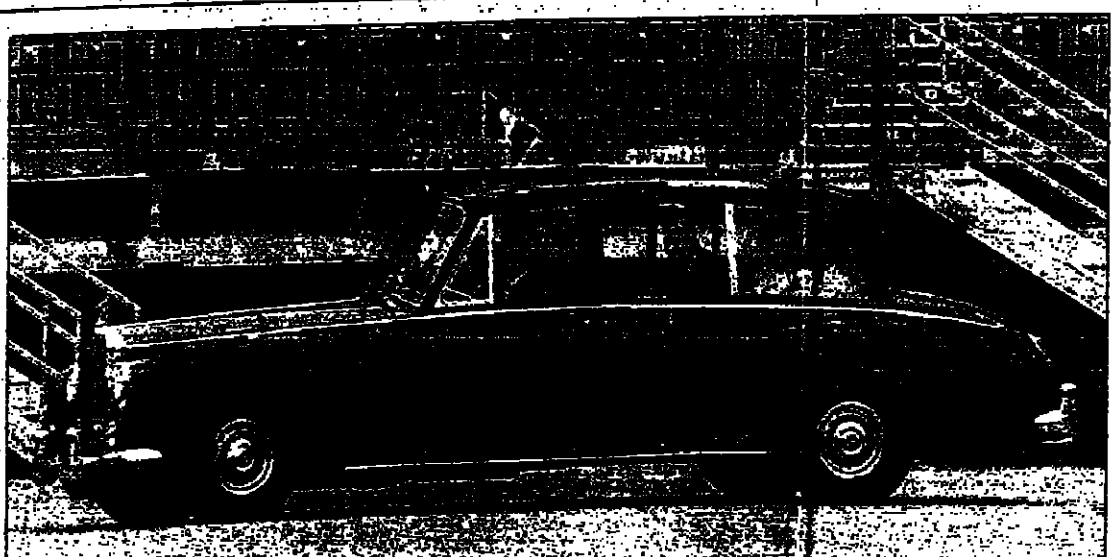
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We only take orders from royalty... but the golden age of the state limousine is probably over

You have the vague feeling that the dictionary has misdefined "free", when free servicing that you pay for is perfectly legal and above board

Don't judge a book by its cover charge

MAIN  DEALER
Free Service & MOT

My car was given a free service the other day. Those of you who share with me the enormous benefit of a car deal which includes free servicing, will be nodding sagely. You too have the vague feeling that the dictionary has misdefined "free", when free servicing that you pay for is perfectly legal and above board. It just makes you want to spit.

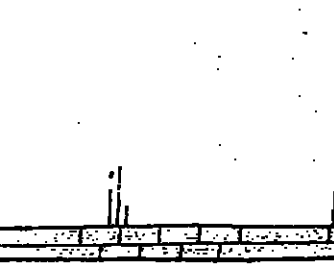
DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

cover emblazoned with letters an inch high saying: "Free for Life!" Below that, in half-inch capital letters, are the words "Service and MOT". These words are repeated in the top right corner of the service booklet's cover. Inside the booklet there are

vouchers and on the bottom of each, in very small letters — less than one-twelfth the size of those on the cover — are the words: "Offer applies to labour only..." Now this did not come as a great shock, for I knew before I bought the car that "free service" meant "free labour", though I was well into making the deal before this became apparent. I should also stress, since regular readers will know that I drive a Ford, that the servicing offer is from the dealer not the manufacturer.



are drawn to the forecourt by an offer that only tells half the story. There are mitigating factors. The actual cost of my service is not really relevant, because it included relatively expensive work (brake drums) which would not need replacing as part of a normal service. And there is the definition of the word service, which dealers

seem to apply to the actual work, ie the labour, as opposed to the parts needed to carry out the work. But how much am I actually saving by having the dealer carry the labour charge? The service I had this week was a big one, at 38,000 miles, but the one before was a straightforward 10,000-mile service with 27,000 miles on the

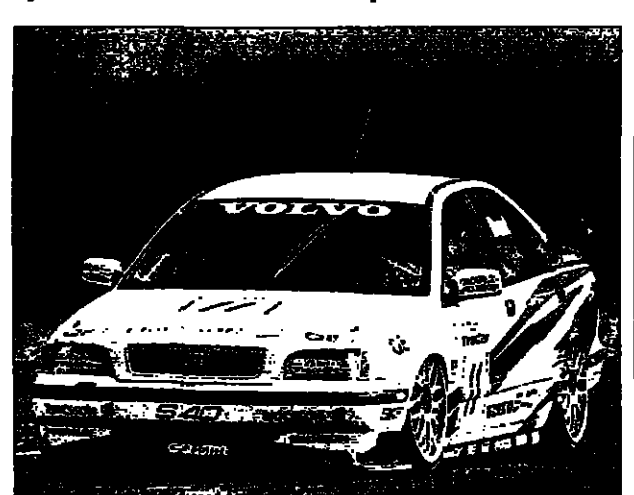
clock. I took the car in, went for a walk and collected it just over an hour later. The Ford main agent I use charges labour at £39.75 per hour plus VAT, so I "saved" a total of £46.70. But the dealer is 15 miles from my home, so the round trip cost me nearly a gallon of petrol. The more recent service involved

having a courtesy car: this cost me £10, because many dealers no longer insure their customers as part of their fleet insurance. Had I taken the car to my local garage, a 10-minute walk from home, I would have paid a labour charge of £26.80 per hour plus VAT, a total of £31.49. So the saving represented by free labour is worth having, but hardly spectacular, taking into account the inconvenience of having to use main agents. However it is the presentation that niggles. The car industry is fiercely competitive as to market share. Every salesperson knows that getting putative customers on to the forecourt is half the battle, so the enticing offer of "free" servicing is a key marketing strategy. I think some dealers are being a little free with the word free. THIS week I discovered the ultimate in mini-roundabouts. Using to retrace my steps (the motoring euphemism for being lost), I was pleased to spot a mini-roundabout, only to find it was impossible to circumnavigate the damned thing without stopping halfway and putting the car in reverse. Another triumph for the road safety fascists.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hatching open the excitement

THRILLS and spills go live on television for the first time this weekend as the British Touring Car Championships hit Brands Hatch. The series has replaced Formula One as the premier motorsport on BBC — good news for motorsport fans because touring cars offers more excitement per mile than almost any other type of racing. That has been proved so far with the factory-based teams battling for the points, including our Volvo S40 Racing, the team managed by TWR, which also runs Damon Hill's F1 Arrows car. We are following the fortunes of the Volvos, with Kelvin Burt and Rickard Rydell at the wheel, with



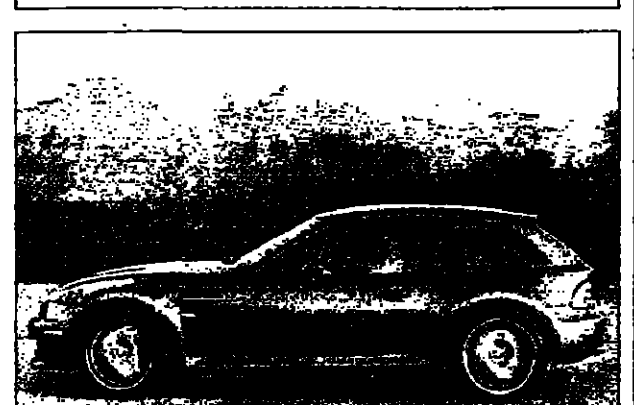
Volvo S40 Racing: hopes of a first win this weekend

■ JEEP has recalled 19,000 Cherokee models to check for stress fractures in the steering mechanism. The American company wants owners to bring in all vehicles made between January, 1993, and the last of the 1996 model year to be checked and any fault rectified free by dealers.

■ THERE is still time to book for the Goodwood Festival of Speed, which takes place on June 20, 21, and 22 in the grounds of the beautiful house owned by Lord March in Sussex. The line-up of star cars grows by the day. Booking office is on 01243-787766.

■ THE organisation that sells personalised numbers to motorists has changed its number. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency takes an average 7,000 calls a week on its teleshopping hotline, now on 01792-773366 and open Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. The DVLA raised £37 million selling personalised registrations last year.

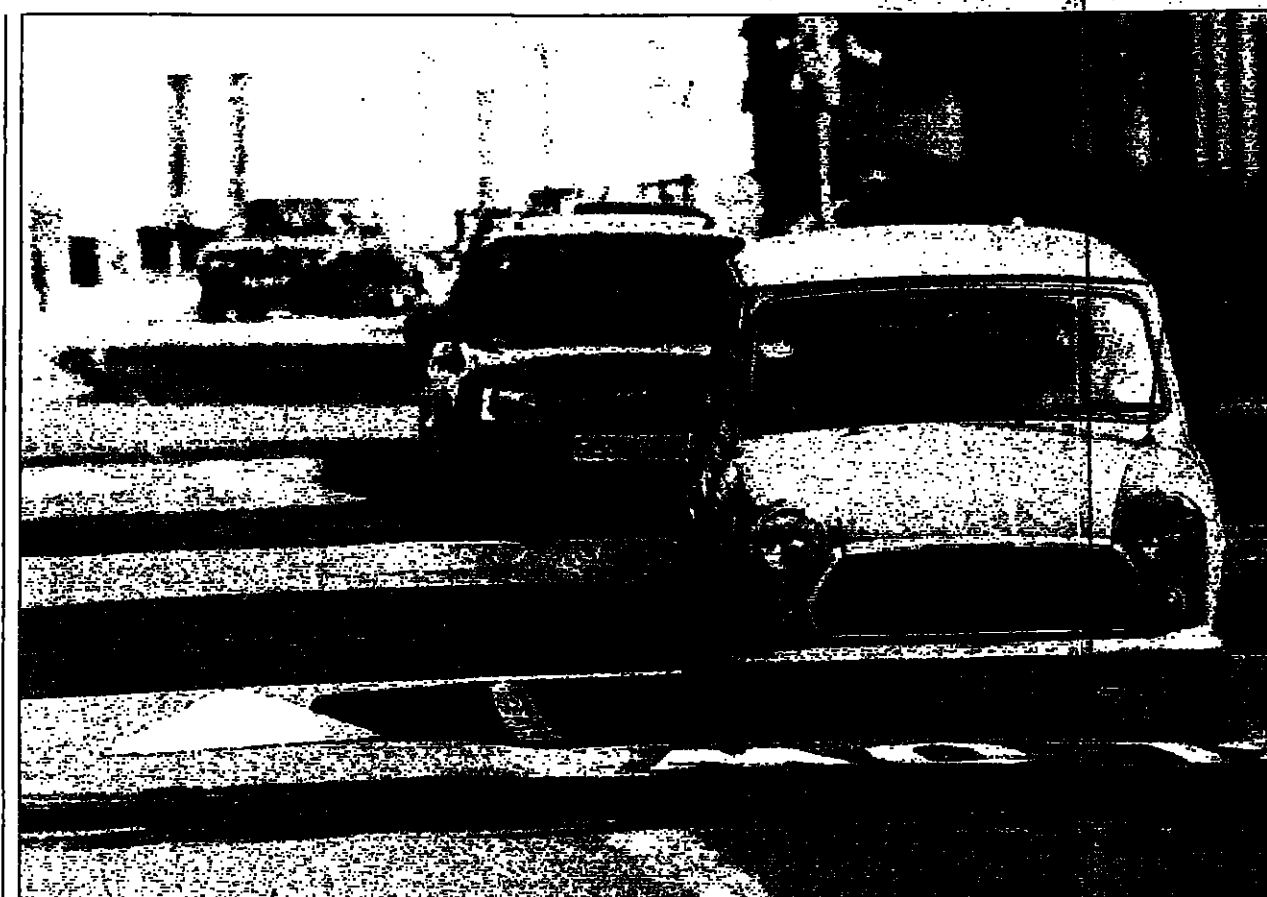
■ NO STOPPING the rise of motorcycle sales, up 52 per cent in April over the same month last year. Scooters and superbikes are the extreme ends of the spectrum doing best, and the Motor Cycle Industry Association says the new Government's attitude to motorcycles as a way to beat congestion could boost sales even further.



BMW Z3 coupé space-age shape with 155mph potential

BMW puts a lid on the Z3

THIS WILL be hot — very hot. BMW is close to launching the coupé derivative of its delectable Z3 sports car, and the tin top version promises to be a stunner. BMW is keeping details under wraps, but says that the car will get the 3.3-litre six-cylinder from the M3 which offers 321 brake horse power. That should be enough for a



Getting the hump: residents who thought they would benefit complain of noise, pollution and damage to their own cars

Smoothing out the lumps

The dreaded road hump, hated by many motorists, passengers and cyclists, is under attack from the people it is supposed to protect: residents of streets where speeding vehicles are thought to be a hazard. Campaigns to iron out the humps and prevent new ones from being installed have been launched by residents' groups around Britain, especially in London where all 32 boroughs have spent millions of pounds on "traffic calming" measures. Critics claim the humps create extra noise and pollution, damage their own cars and generally cause more trouble than they are worth. Road users, who have found themselves powerless, are hitting back with a series of legal actions. In a settlement thought to be the largest so far, Southwark Council in London has paid £2,000 to a pensioner who suffered minor injuries and saw his moped wrecked after hitting a poorly marked hump. "The entire concept of putting in road humps for safety reasons is at fault," says Brian Simpson, chairman of Cam, the Campaign against Road-hump Madness. "They are more likely to cause accidents than prevent them."

"In my area of north London one old lady tripped over a hump and fell while trying to cross the road and a woman cyclist needed stitches in a face wound after hitting an exceptionally high one. Passengers with back problems and other injuries suffer considerable pain when jolted over them."

Simpson, an occupational psychologist, has led a spirited campaign against Haringey council after humps were installed in the Miltons area of

Traffic calming has led to so much anger that many councils are having to think again, reports Tony Dawe

Highgate. "The humps had been put in without any justification," he says. "There had been no accidents, no evidence of speeding or rat-running."

To make matters worse, 27 of the 35 humps were illegally and dangerously high. After months of deliberation, and compensating some motorists for damaged exhaust pipes, the council finally agreed to reduce the ramp gradients and to further consultation which might just lead to the removal of the humps.

In many districts, traffic calming can prove successful and we have reported how schemes on a rat-run through an Exeter council estate and in Yeovil reduced accidents and casualties. Motoring organisations, aware of these benefits, have been reluctant to criticise the schemes, but stress that councils should think carefully about installing them and make sure humps are not too high.

Islington Council in north London is one authority that has agreed to remove humps after local protests. Tony Dikan, a council spokesman, explains: "We expected more



Tony Blackmore: two-year wait for a £2,000 settlement

- LONDON
A1209 Bethnal Green Road. Long-term roadworks between Vauxhall Road and Cambridge Heath Road. A306, Hammersmith Bridge. Closed both ways to general traffic.
B450 Ladbroke Grove, Kensal Green. Long southbound delays expected for work on Harrow Road. Affecting both roads in both directions.
A5 Kilburn High Road. Major roadworks with only one lane open.
A406, Neasden. Carriageway reduced to two lanes westbound for roadworks.
A4 South Kensington. Major roadworks on Gloucester Road. Regular delays from Earl's Court to beyond.
A212 Grange Road, Thornton Heath. Carriageway reduced to one lane southbound at the High Street, which itself is down to one lane eastbound.
B317 West Kensington. North End Road closed northbound from A4 to A315, with one-way traffic southbound.
● SOUTH-EAST
M40 Buckinghamshire. Long-term roadworks with a contraflow between junctions 1a (M25) and 3 (Wycombe East).
M20 West Malling, Kent. Long-term works for erection of traffic signals on junction 4 slip roads and roundabout. Various lane closures.
M40 Oxfordshire, between Watlington and Oxford. Resurfacing work. Drivers heading to junction 8 from Oxford are advised to use the A40 and A418 as alternatives.
A23 Hoolet, Surrey. Gas main work near Dean Lane junction causes peak-time delays on both A23 and M23.
A3 Guildford, Surrey. Roadworks with contraflow at A31 interchange, delays during rush hour. A31 also affected.
M25 Surrey. Various restrictions and lane closures both ways between Reigate and the A3.
● SOUTH-WEST
M5 Bristol. Contraflow across Avonmouth Bridge with 50mph limit.
A39 Bridgewater, Somerset. Temporary lights for works on Quistock Road.
A4 Box Hill, Wiltshire. Temporary lights for water work.
● MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA
A1 Alconbury, Cambridgeshire. Construction work with contraflow and lane closure.
A142 near Newmarket, Cambridgeshire. Roadworks in Landwade area.
A1064 Acle, Norfolk. Temporary lights at Acle Way bridge.
A500 Stoke-on-Trent. Contraflow on The Queensway, with only one lane open each way between Talke and Pontefract.
A34 Birmingham. Major roadworks on Stratford Road in Sparkhill. Also no entry into Highgate Road.
A44 Wolverhampton. Major works under way on Bliton Road, near Cooper Street.
M6 West Midlands. Slip road from Salford Circus to M6 north closed at junction 6. Diversions via Lichfield Road (A5127).
● NORTH
A597 Workington, Cumbria. Roadworks with temporary lights at B5296 junction.
M65 Lancashire. Contraflow between Blackburn and Accrington, with westbound entry slip road at junction 7 down to a single lane.
A19 south of York. Long-term roadworks with various lane closures at Fulford interchange.
A61 Tankersley, South Yorkshire. Contraflow near M1 junction 98 with no exit from Tankersley on to A61.
A19 north of Newcastle. Reduced to one lane both ways between Moor Farm Roundabout (A189) and Killingworth for major roadworks.
M1 West Yorkshire. Major roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane closures and speed restrictions. Delays on the M1, M62 and Dewsbury Road.
● WALES
A448 Monmouthshire. Major roadworks between Usk junction and M4 junction 24 (Newport).
A470 Dolwyddelan, Conwy. Temporary lights for improvement work at Bod Unig.
A548 Flintshire. Carriageway reduced to one lane between Caeleir and Kelsterton with a 30mph limit.
A465 between Aberdare and Neath. Various southbound lane closures for bridge works.
A470 Buthin Wells, Powys. Temporary lights for roadworks near A483 junction.
A483 Fablan Way, Swansea. Lane closures both ways near the docks entrance on main dual carriageway into Swansea from the M4.
A472 Portpool, Torfaen. Contraflow between Portpool and the Heron roundabout. Lengthy delays expected, especially from the A4042 direction.
● SCOTLAND
M88 Dumfriesshire, Fife. Contraflow between junction 9, M9 Newbridge Spur, Edinburgh. Major roadworks at Newbridge roundabout (M8 junction 2).
A737 near Beth, Renfrewshire. Temporary lights between Rosehead and Beth.



AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans

FIRST RUN IN 1911, THE MONTE CARLO RALLY IS MOTORSPORTS OLDEST SURVIVING FIXTURE...

WHEN STIRLING MORGAN CRASHED HIS MASERATI 350S INTO A TREE DURING THE 1956 MILLE MIGLIA, FELLOW COMPETITOR FANGIO GRIEVED AND OFFERED HIM A LIFT...

FERDINAND PORSCHE'S FIRST ENGINEERING ASSIGNMENT COMPLETED WHEN HE WAS STILL A TEENAGER... WENT TO INSTALL ELECTRICITY IN HIS PARENTS' HOUSE...

EARLY PACKARDS HAD ONLY ONE CYLINDER. BECAUSE, AS J.W. PACKARD PUT IT, FOUR CYLINDERS JUST MEANT FOUR TIMES AS MUCH TO GO WRONG.

'I can't believe that little car goes so fast'

Dareh Gregorian watches the rally version of Ford's Ka win prizes for the drivers and praise from the crowds at the Manx championship

The brochure said it would combine "functionality, value, safety, and security". There was nothing in the fine print about going round a corner sideways.

Ford's little Ka was designed to look outrageous but tackle city streets in comfort. But Ford simply couldn't resist the challenge of turning the Ka into a rally hot-rod and there it was last weekend, getting all the "oohs" and "aahs" at the Manx Rally Championship as it battled between the massed ranks of MGs and Porsches. One spectator, probably expecting a family runabout, was taken aback by the sight of a squat little rally Ka with its new decals. "It looks like a little rocket," he said.

The Ka is not big, not loud, not that powerful, but the baby-sized, bubble-shaped car, considered more of a shopping trolley than a racing car, finished first in its class in its first Tarmac rally on the Isle of Man, weeks after it finished second in the gravel-roaded first stage of the Mintex National Rally in Scotland.

The rally Ka's small body makes it look and feel as if it is going faster than it is, but the suspension handled all the island offered — winding, tight roads, hilly, rugged terrain, bad weather and sharp turns — without much problem. "It was excellent," said the winning driver, Gareth Jones. "It's the best handling car I've driven."

Andrea Hall, the top woman finisher who captured the Teleflorist Corp-des-Dames trophy, also praised the handling, calling it "brilliant, even with the wet roads".

The rally roadster was also a hit with the hundreds of spectators who braved the wind, rain and cold to line the different stages of the race.

"I can't believe that little car is going so fast," said one. "It's great!" yelled another. "The drivers are crazy," said a third.

Crowds gathered round the mighty mite, with its radical design and massive Ka decals, even before the race, and curious onlookers would peer into the stripped-down body with looks of confusion and astonishment.

Ford is hoping this eye-catching "little rocket" will take off as an affordable introduction to rallying. With optional power steering, the Ka costs around £8,000, and Ford's rally kit costs another £8,000 plus VAT. You can install the kit yourself, or pay

about £2,000 in labour to get it done by a mechanic.

While the kit is expensive, it offers something unique for rallying: an adjustable suspension system that allows the car to run on both gravel and Tarmac with a minimal amount of tinkering. Also included are new brake pads, a stronger clutch, a roll-over, sump shield, gripper seats, tachometer and plumbed extinguishers, while a 'high-lift' can raise the standard 60bhp to 75 and a shorter final-drive ratio helps the car accelerate more quickly.

Once the kit is assembled, you'll have a car ready to compete in several national and international rallies, with the chance to pick up points and cash prizes in the 1.3 group A5 class.

Ford is also trying to entice customers with its own sub-championship, offering cash prizes for the top Ka finishers. There are now five rally Kas running, and Ford is confident that the number will grow to about 40 next year. The company is aiming to have around 300 rally Kas racing around the world by 1999.

"It's very exciting and very exhilarating," says Kevin Shortis, co-ordinator of the Rally Ka Championship for Ford MotorSport. "We've got a great reaction to them. Since the car itself was only introduced last October, we didn't have a lot of time to get the rally kit ready. By the time it was done, most people already had cars for this season. We're making more improvements and I think there will be a lot more out there next year. I've already had about 200 inquiries from around the world."

Among the improvements will be a more powerful engine, enabling the car to reach faster speeds. The Ka hit a maximum of 105mph at the rally, up from the 96mph offered by the non-rally version, but Ford would like to nudge that figure higher.

"But we don't want to make it too powerful. This is a car that beginners can learn to rally in," Shortis says. "Sometimes with a faster car, all you learn is how to crash faster. We want our Ka drivers to learn how to handle the speed instead of letting the speed handle them."

And while the rally Ka might be less practical and comfortable than its civilian predecessor, when it comes to careering around tight corners at high speeds, it is much more fun.



With company hopes that it will take off as an affordable introduction to rallying — you can install the kit yourself — the rally Ka is drawing inquiries from all over the world



A different kind of success

FOR A WHILE, it looked as though Ford's bold experiment was going to fall flat. The Ka arrived last year in one of the glitziest launches the motor industry has seen, with stars of stage, screen and fashion magazine rounded up to lend their glamour, writes Kevin Eason.

Ka needed the push because its radical styling apparently caught the buying public off-guard. Traditionally unadventurous punters didn't fancy pairing with their money on something that looks like a cross between a bubble car and a Toca toy.

Sales languished for a long time, a slightly worrying proposition for Ford given that it has a factory geared up to make up to 240,000 of the things annually. Fortunately for Ford though, familiarity is breeding a less sceptical

buyer and sales are climbing fast now. Sales in April were up to their highest monthly total at more than 1,000 and Ford has shifted nearly 7,000 so far this year in Britain.

According to dealers, the hardest part is getting potential customers behind the wheel: once there though, they fall for the car's brilliant interior styling — all done by Ford in Britain at Dunton, Essex — and the car's drivability in town.

Certainly, Ford does not deserve to fall with the Ka. Though the 1.3-litre engine is about as new-fangled as flared trousers, the styling decision was brave and answers exactly the question most often posed by the car cynics: why do all cars look the same? They don't — and Ka proves it.

Members of Ford's family who ran with the fast set

Take one family car, dismantle, then add a spicy engine, tough suspension and a touch of zest for the bodywork — and you have a rally car, writes Kevin Eason.

Ford has used the recipe for turning humble hatchbacks and solid saloons into track-tearing rally racers for years.

The little Escort has been one of the most fearsome challengers on the rally circuit, helping Bjorn Waldegaard to his World Rally Championship in 1979, while Ford took the manufacturers' title.

Ford appeared in the earliest days of rallying, the company's enthusiasm for motorsport sharpened when a Ford V8 powered home in 1936 to win the Monte Carlo Rally. That V8 was one of the most extraordinary cars ever to compete, driven and redesigned by the Romanians Zamfirescu and Cristea. They linked the steering to the front brakes so that the car slid around corners rather than being steered. It obviously worked, though Ford did not take them up on the system.



Escort rally version: fearsome challenger on the circuit

The Lotus Cortina, probably the first car Ford decided to "soup-up" for production, appeared in the Sixties, but the Escort has been the star with its RS (Rallye Sport) badge and engines from Cosworth.

The list of winning drivers is long: Roger Clark, Timo Mäkinen, Ari Vatanen, Didier Auriol and Carlos Sainz among the successful legends who have helped to make Ford a motorsport legend.

Chris Rea's driving passion

Kevin Eason on how you can join the rock star for a special movie screening

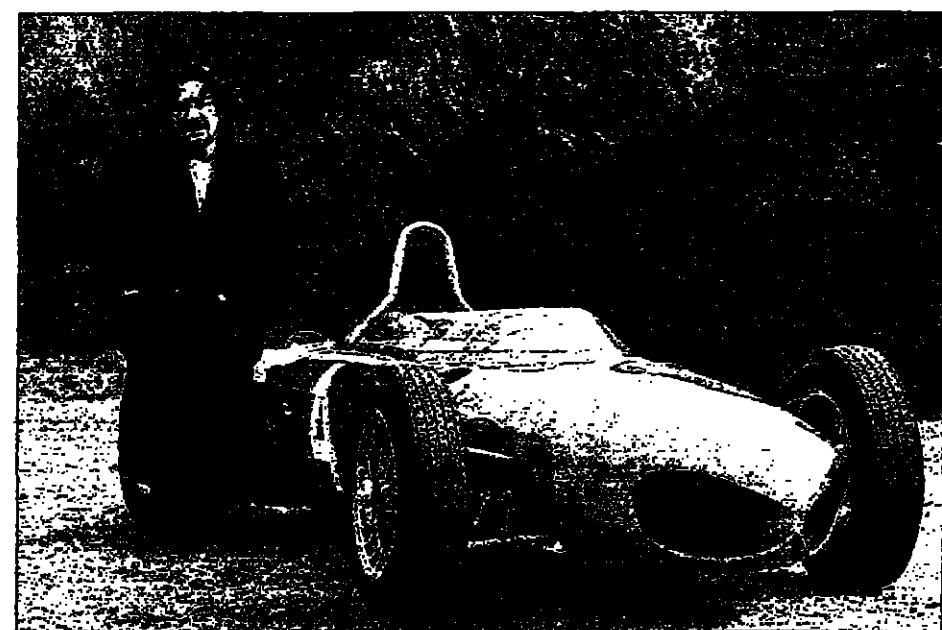
In a cobbled backstreet, a small boy pedals his tin car between the clutter of washing lines and dustbins. In his dreams though, he is at the wheel of a scarlet Ferrari, the exotic and glamorous hero of the race track.

That boy was Chris Rea, who left grimy Middlesbrough to become one of the world's best-known rock stars, glamorous enough you might think. But his dreams have always involved Ferrari — a dream he has turned into a movie, *La Passione*, which opens soon.

But lucky readers of *CAR 97* do not have to wait for the opening, because Chris is offering a free and private showing of the movie next week in London. Winners of the 20 pairs of tickets will arrive at about 8pm on Thursday at Mr Young's Theatre in D'Arbly Street, deep in the heart of London's theatreland, to be welcomed with cocktails which they can sip as they tour an exhibition marking the 30th birthday of Ferrari, as well as the opening of Chris's new film. They will also receive a small gift to mark this unique occasion.

Readers will be witnessing the result of a labour of love that consumed Chris throughout last year as the film — which features stars such as Shirley Bassey — progressed.

The image of the Sharknose Ferrari and this incredibly exotic driver called Wolfgang von Trips was an



Chris Rea and the replica Sharknose Ferrari, above, built for the film

A scene from *La Passione*, recreating Rea's love of Ferrari

indelible memory for me when I was a child," he says. "It sparked a passion which has never died, and what makes Ferrari unique is the fact that it inspires this devotion among people of all types, classes, status, colours and creeds around the world."

La Passione tells the story of Chris's awakening to the magic of Ferrari. Growing up as the son of an Italian who ran an ice-cream shop in Middles-

brough, Ferrari was a feature of the household alongside the development of the music which eventually made Chris famous as he sold millions of albums around the world. *La Passione* allows him to marry music and cars with Chris writing a soundtrack for the film, which is also being released as an album.

To ensure authenticity, Chris had a replica of the famous Sharknose made for

the film because none had survived even though they were among the most charismatic race cars of their time. The car was shown to Phil Hill, Ferrari's American ex-world champion who drove the original Sharknose, and he was astonished by the replica's accuracy.

"He was taken aback," says Chris. "But he proves the point that people touched by Ferrari never forget. That is what I wanted this movie to be about. To let other people understand this passion."

To qualify to win a pair of tickets, answer this question: Name the British Formula One driver who won his only world championship in a Ferrari. Answers on a postcard only to reach us by close of working day on Tuesday May 20, addressed to Ferrari Competition, *CAR 97*, The Times, 1, Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Please give a daytime telephone number.

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Stuart Birch is taken for a memorable ride in the Army's High Mobility Demonstrator



Making a splash: taking nearly 6ft of water in its stride, the 70mph HMD can carry nine tons of fuel or ammunition across almost any terrain to support fast-moving tanks

Mobilised lorry parts put on a war footing

Greater than the sum of its parts (and some of those parts you may have passed on a motorway today), there is only one High Mobility Demonstrator in the world — and there has never been anything quite like it.

It may look like a science fiction artist's idea of what military trucks will be like far into the 21st century, but beneath the superficial glamour are standard components, many fitted to everyday lorries. On their own, those components are mundane items, but brought together in the HMD they create a vehicle of formidable capability.

After the Gulf war and demise of the Warsaw Pact, the Ministry of Defence reassessed its requirements for the British Army's lorry fleet. One view was that it needed to consider a new breed of high performance truck that could dash across country — on and off roads — to support fast-moving tanks. It would have to carry about nine tons of ammunition or fuel, be able to reach at least 70mph, accelerate to 60mph in less than 60 seconds and pound over appalling country at 40mph or more. It would have to be exceptionally tough — and versatile enough to take on different roles.

The big problem was money. The MoD did not want to sink millions of pounds into the development of a super-sophisticated piece of advanced technology. So the MoD's Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (Dera) came up with the idea of designing a new, very rigid chassis but attaching standard automotive components to it.

"It is a technology demonstrator not a development vehicle," says Alan Arnott, principal technical consultant, who has been involved with the programme, worth approximately £2 million, from its conception. "But it shows just what can be done by taking proprietary compo-



nents — the sort that are fitted to a wide variety of commercial vehicles — and using them to create a vehicle with very special capabilities."

John Blake, who has been test driving military vehicles for 25 years, showed me some of those capabilities at Dera's winding, undulating, tree-lined test track at Farnborough, Hampshire.

In the HMD's cockpit, I settled into a hip-hugging rally car seat fitted with a full safety harness. Blake started the 10-litre, 350bhp turbocharged intercooled diesel engine. "Biggest rally car in the world,"

But rally cars do not generally come with six-wheel drive, six-wheel steering, 4ft 2in high Michelin XML tyres, nine-speed automatic transmission and weigh in at 20 tons. Nor can the driving position be switched in 20 minutes from right to left hand drive.

The throttle went to the floor, the giant engine growled and whined, and the HMD set off. Blake drove very quickly, very smoothly, controlling the monster through a tiny Momo steering wheel, more in keeping with a Ferrari than a military vehicle. The Hydragas suspension — distantly

related to that used on the MGF — worked hard to smooth hollows as deep as shell holes and keep the HMD on track over a rutted, sandy surface. The automatic gearbox has a logic system so that manual override is rarely necessary, and giant inboard Rockwell disc brakes, aided by a six channel Wabco anti-lock system, kept things neatly under control.

Leaving a swirling dust cloud in its wake, the HMD swept through loose-surfaced corners with aplomb, slammed down gradients and plunged into deep ponds,

hauling its bulk up the opposite bank, water streaming from its wheels and chassis as it set off again. Not surprisingly, Blake says he enjoys his work.

But fun though all this may be, the HMD — officially a combat support and resupply vehicle — is a very serious project. Arnott, Steven Goldsack, senior engineer and Phil Dandy, project manager, have overseen its design at Dera, followed by construction by Ricardo Special Vehicles. Although off-the-shelf proven components have been used, they undertake tasks for which

HMD SPECIFICATION

Engine: Cummins six-cylinder, 10-litre 350bhp turbocharged and intercooled diesel (used to power many trucks including ERF, Foden and Seddon Atkinson).

Transmission: Eaton, with nine forward and two reverse gears (used by Foden and Leyland).

Steering: All three axles — third at low speed only (ZF system used on Foden and Leyland-DAF).

Tyres: Michelin 475/80R20 XML with beadlocks for low pressure running.

Brakes: Rockwell Dura-Master inboard discs (also on Timoney firecrash tender). Wabco six-channel anti-lock system (Wabco supplies anti-lock brakes for many manufacturers, including Land Rover).

Equipment: Air-conditioning and nuclear, biological and chemical protection by Howden Aircontrol (who make air-conditioning and nuclear fallout, biological and chemical protection equipment for the Challenger battle tank).

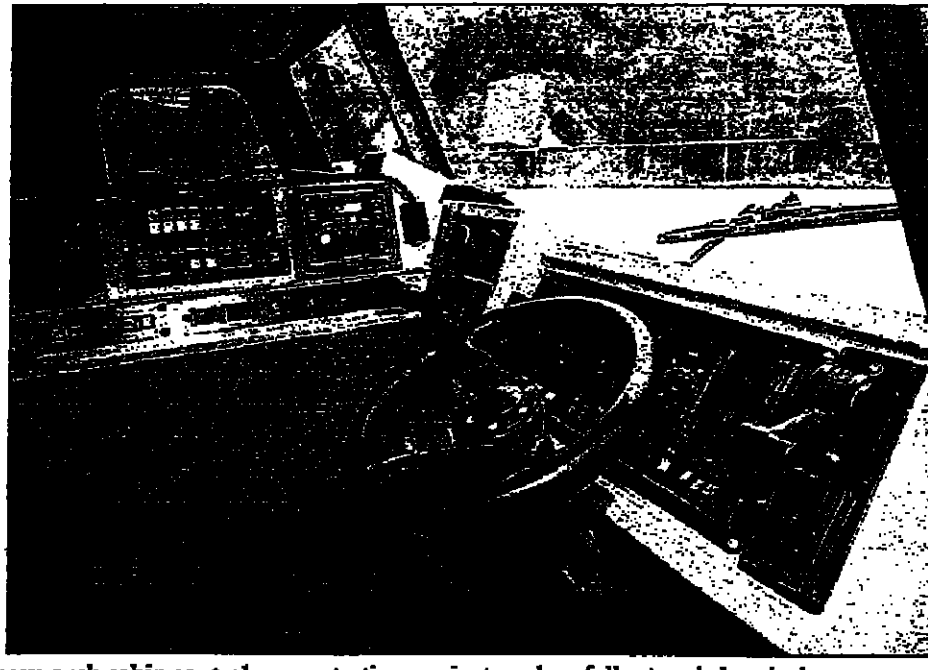
Performance: 0-60mph in 53 seconds, top speed 70mph.

Economy: Fuel consumption on-road about 5mpg; off-road 3-4mpg.

Price: Sorry, you can't have one.



Test driver John Blake calls it the "biggest rally car in the world", but rally cars don't have such cabin controls or protection against nuclear fallout and chemical weapons



STEERING COLUMN

A roundabout way to fame in Stoke-on-Trent

Alan Hudson, the former Chelsea and England star, talks to Alasdair Steven

When Chelsea run out for the Cup Final today one of their former players, Alan Hudson, might be looking on with a tinge of regret. The team reached the final when he was in the squad in 1970, but he did not play in either the first match at Wembley or the replay at Old Trafford, which Chelsea won 2-1. When he did get to play in a final — for Arsenal in 1978 — his team was beaten 1-0 by Ipswich.

Hudson had a distinguished career with Stoke City, Chelsea and Arsenal in the Sixties and Seventies, but only played twice for England, although many say he should have won more caps. He was in the same side as Peter Osgood, Terry Venables and George Graham.

How did you first learn to drive?

I was really taught by watching my brother crash his car. I learnt quite quickly what not to do.

What was your first car?

My father told a friend I had signed for Chelsea — I was only 18. He gave me a Renault — fairly old, but I thought it was very smart.

What car do you drive now?

I've just got a Mercedes sports which I drive with great care and pride.

Do you enjoy driving?

I dislike driving in cities: it is just a nightmare. I do like driving in the countryside and often get up early and hit the motorways when they are empty.

What is your dream car?

At Chelsea we used to go to a restaurant in the Kings Road and the owner always parked his Corniche Convertible outside. He sometimes took me for a spin, and even let me drive it once.

What is your most hated car?

The Jam Sandwich — a police car. I am forever checking in the mirror to make sure they aren't about.

What is your worst habit in a car?

I do not have bad habits in a car... not when it's moving anyway. I have to say I am not against driving and talking on the mobile — especially if you are driving an automatic. I often think the concentration lapses far more easily when you are just driving along.

What infuriates you about other drivers?

The same as life: ignorance and selfishness. The casual Sunday motorist — of either sex — who is in no hurry and won't let you pass.

What is the most unusual thing you have done in a car?

I drove over a roundabout in Stoke-on-Trent once after an evening in the pub. The car was a write-off and I broke a hand. I gather the good people of Stoke have named the roundabout after me.

Have you any points on your licence?

Not now, but I was banned many years ago. I actually enjoy walking or taking public transport.

What do listen to in the car?

Frank Sinatra, Willie Nelson, Jackson Browne, and Supertramp mostly. But I'm never far from a Sinatra disc.

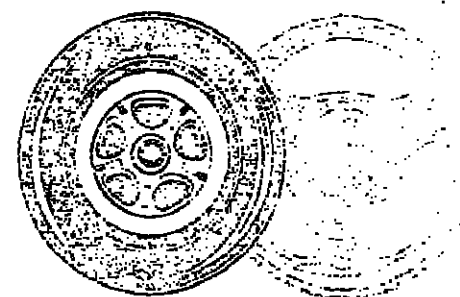
If you were Secretary of State for Transport, what is the first thing you would do?

Remove all parking meters and throw clamps in the river. They just don't work. Certain areas should just be blocked off and everyone would have to use public transport.



Alan Hudson: red card for clamps and parking meters

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A kitchen service will keep you going

Jane Blunden visits the club where anyone can learn basic car maintenance

Maintenance at home is well nigh impossible with modern cars that come loaded down with enough computing power to send a man to the moon. But if you drive an old banger a lot of money can be saved by taking a few simple lessons. If your car, like mine, uses the imperishable Austin Morris "A" series engine there can be no better source of advice than Lester Stock, who was hard at work grinding in a set of valves in the cylinder head on the kitchen table when my friend, Catherine Tye, and I arrived.

He patiently explained how the engine worked, and as PC absolute beginners we were drawn in immediately. "We must keep this sort of engine alive and in front of the public so they can see what they have lost. If people realise this great loss, there will be a reaction," he said.

The "A" series cylinder head is not very heavy and can be carried easily. "You don't need much in the way of tools to do a top overhaul," Lester went on. "Just a small electric motor to true the valve seats. Not a messy job, so you can work in the comfort and cleanliness of your home without damaging the furniture."

He then sent us down to the car to decock the tops of the piston—a simple scraping job using any blunt-edged tool and wire brush. Catherine monitored the pieces while I got my nails dirty.

Lester is an old-time expert and cars are his life. "I love them and I hate them," he told me when we met at his Battersea home, and immediately launched into a particular problem of car ownership for Londoners. "Less than one per cent possess a dry garage—the essential for proper car maintenance. The kerbside can be hazardous. What you need is a nice flat place where you can actually work around the car."

The majority of people come to car maintenance because they want to get control of their lives, partly because they are afraid garages are over-charging."

The present situation is a disaster. Most London bor-

oughs have cut car maintenance courses, and as a result people are becoming car phobic, angry with traffic and even angrier with themselves. Because of the cuts, Lester has gone freelance and teaches would-be mechanics the basics at a community car club. A complete ethnic mix from top to bottom of society arrive with their vehicles, some dating from the Fifties. The type of work is enormously varied. Some people arrive expecting a magic wand or a genie to spring out of a lamp; the hard core stay on, learning how to deal with the main problems themselves under supervision. The group retires to the local café afterwards to swap details.

Lester's expertise began at the age of nine when he watched his father, an original member of the Royal Flying Corps, at work. "He could mend anything, I had a colossal admiration for him and I wanted to use my hands."

He followed the family tradition to train as a motor mechanic, but soon discovered that his heart lay in education. Some of his most enjoyable teaching has been helping boys considered disruptive or dim. The trouble has been to persuade teachers or parents that these young people who hate books are good at small repair jobs, increasing their confidence and skills.

On modern cars, Lester was drawn into controversy: "We are getting the type of cars that people don't want. They are all right for travelling salespeople who mostly use motorways, but the vast majority of owners are not that sort." People want a car which is simple and easy to maintain and not expensive to run. "Take the Morris Oxford, for example,



Lester Stock tackles a cylinder head at the kitchen sink "It's not a messy job, so you can work in the comfort and cleanliness of your home without damaging the furniture"



As a club member gets down to it, Lester shows Catherine Tye the finer points of maintenance: "We have a fantastic time, it brings people together and one learns to help the other"



now manufactured in India and renamed the Ambassador—that's the sort of car we should keep in this country." (Fortunately, an entrepreneur from Fulham is reimporting the modern Ambassador with its old-world charm, modernised engine and gearbox.)

Most people, Lester told me, buy a five- to 10-year-old car,

run it into the ground and abandon it to the scrap heap. To avoid frustration and cost, he advocates joining a car club, and believes that maintenance is a community concern: "We have a fantastic time, it brings all sorts of people together. Friendships grow, one learns to help the other."

Lester obviously puts brakes at the top of his check list. Many new students are horrified to discover how close they are to a lethal accident when their car appears to be singing like a bird because we can all be lulled into a false sense of security in modern cars. The advantage of starting with the brakes is that you also look at

things connected to them: steering, suspension and tyres. This is an area where maintenance can literally save your life.

The next big item is bodywork. Once rust gets serious, you must do something about it, however difficult. Renewing the front pillars of an Austin Allegro may be sheer torture

as you gash your arms struggling with jagged edges and rusted bolts to remove and refit the doors, but is essential. And Lester's third tip is simply a good regular service (plus a reminder to add anti-freeze before winter). You can also save money by working through your MOT list in advance, as smaller items,

such as wiper blades and lights, you can fix yourself. And there can be off-road bonuses from Lester's lessons. When my lorry broke down the other day, I fixed it myself by applying some of the basics he'd taught me.

For details, write to the Strand Centre, Elm Park, Lambeth, London SW22 2EH.

ALAN DONOHUE



Nicholas Brimblecombe and some of the touring club's fleet: "Mark II and E-type Jaguars are the most popular, but we can arrange an Aston Martin Vantage, Rolls-Royce Corniche, even an MGA Roadster"

Journeys of Eastern delights on classic wheels

Few men could claim to be as proud to be British as Nicholas Brimblecombe of The Grand Touring Club, a company that organises holidays in East Anglia especially for fellow Anglophiles driving classic cars.

"I think we have a lot to be proud of in this part of the country," says the quintessential Englishman, who is hoping to attract visitors to the region with a combination of British countryside, roads, food, architecture and cars.

But it isn't British holiday-makers who are getting behind the wheel of the club's fine stable of cars; it's motorists from the Continent, predominantly Germany, who are taking breaks with a slice of English heritage.

This year more than three million German visitors are expected to holiday in Britain. According to the British

Tourist Association, they are the second biggest spenders (after Americans), spending £976 million on UK holidays last year. And with motoring Anglomaniac in Germany, where drivers are clamouring for traditional British machinery such as Jaguars and Aston Martins, The Grand Touring Club expects to be booked up this summer.

The company began four years ago, organising touring holidays abroad for classic car owners, but this year launched its tailor-made holidays in East Anglia with the added twist of providing the cars. The packages include visiting the region's stately houses and gardens from Constable Country to North Norfolk, eating and drinking local delicacies, staying in character hotels and driving on some of Britain's quietest and prettiest roads in a range of classic cars.

The Germans are coming—and they want to drive great cars on holiday, says Helen Mound

"The Germans are most keen to get behind the wheel of the Jaguars," says Brimblecombe. "The most popular cars we offer are the Mark II and E-types. But we can arrange breaks in an Aston Martin Vantage, Rolls-Royce Corniche, even an MGA Roadster." As long as it's British, Germans want to drive it.

The cars are all in pristine condition, despite some being more than 25 years old. The smell of leather still bathes the interior, chrome features are polished to a perfect shine and metallic paintwork, although recent, remains true to traditional Sixties and Seventies colours.

There are some modern features, such

as stereos, but they are reasonably subtle, and a Tracker security device, to help relocate the car if it's stolen, is out of sight. Only the clunk of the remote central locking seems a little out of place on a Sixties saloon, but the holiday motorists are more than happy with the occasional modern touch in the name of convenience.

However, not all old British cars are a hit with the German holidaymakers. An HMC Mark IV, a convertible sports car that resembles the Austin Healey 3000, suffered some unkind words from a recent group. "They called it 'the pig!'" says Brimblecombe,

who was appalled. "They said, 'We call it the pig, you call it the pig too, no?' and I answered that we most certainly do not. They apologised and stopped after that!"

The Grand Touring Club's breaks are ideal for German holidaymakers, because, according to the Tourist Association, they spend an average of seven days in the UK and prefer country sightseeing and "discovery or learning experience" holidays—precisely what Brimblecombe is attempting to offer. He says the demand for treasure or antique hunts with questions on the region comes predominantly from German visitors. "They like to go away having learnt something about the area they've visited."

The club has developed seven routes, each visiting the best spots in the region in a day, so it can accommodate a week-long booking if required. "Most people want a

two- or three-day visit, with a concert booking or a day at the races. And we want them to get out of the car and experience the countryside, but the routes are about 100 miles each, so they get to see a lot in a day."

The British experience extends from the cars and countryside to the food. As well as packing hampers with local produce such as Cromer crab, the club uses only privately-run hotels and restaurants that favour foods from around the region.

The Grand Touring Club can tailor make an East Anglian tour for a weekend, midweek or full week break, and caters for bookings from couples to large groups. Prices start from £385 per person for three nights with a full itinerary set out in a driving handbook and, of course, the fully insured classic car.

Grand Touring Club 01449 737774. Fax 737402.

